

Through the Eyes of the Other: An Analysis of the Representations of Blackness in South African Youth Novels by White Writers from 1976 to 2006

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

Silindiwe Sibanda

----- day of ----- 2012

This thesis is in memory of my grandfather Mbuso Sibanda and my brother Sandiso Sibanda without whom life is a little less.

In honour of my parents in whose immense footprints I wade my way through life.

Mbulelo! My heart! My life! Because of whom all things are possible.

Abstract

The portrayal of blackness in South African youth literature written by white writers from 1976 until 2006 is the primary focus of this thesis. The manner in which blackness is perceived by the other and the ways in which these perceptions are conveyed within literature for the youth have, for decades, served the dual function of interpreting the other, while providing the white reader with a sanitized voyeuristic view of black reality during and after apartheid. South Africa's political history informs a significant part of the ways in which black characters have been portrayed within the literature that is produced in the country.

The argument that is presented in this study is that stereotypes about black people have become an established mode of representation informing the ways in which black characters are portrayed in a majority of the novels analysed herein. Looking at the historical functionality of stereotyping and its role in the formulation of race some of the more common stereotypes of blackness that are part of the South African literary canon will be delineated. Stereotypes of black servitude, sexuality (male and female), superstition, exceptionality, political and intellectual ineptitude, dependency and a proclivity for music and dance are replete in the majority of the novels that will be discussed.

This thesis also looks at the ways in which the contemporary understandings of the concept of race have been constructed and manipulated in accordance with the dictates of the dominant group. Analysing the construction and formation of race this thesis assesses the ways in which race has been made a function of our processes of self-identification and social engagement. However, the definitional parameters of group identities are continually morphing to reflect the mobility of contemporary society and this is reflected in the new sites of identity formation and prejudice, such as culture and religion.

Edward Said's seminal work entitled *Orientalism* (2003) explores the ways in which the other is not only portrayed by the dominant group, but also the ways in which they are interpreted and constructed. Informed by Said's *Orientalism*, this thesis introduces Bantuism as a discursive regime for the elucidation of the construction of blackness within a South(ern)

Africa(n) context. Bantuism assesses the particular nature of the experience of apartheid within a historical and geographical context that particularised South Africa's oppression, and analyses how youth fiction has been affected and influenced by Bantuism.

One of the main arguments is that Bantuism not only encourages the construction of race and the other, but enables the appropriation of the voice of the other thus vesting knowledge, and therefore, power with the dominant group. Concomitant to the appropriation of the voice of the other is the usurping of their history and systems of knowledge and the simultaneous transfer of said knowledge and power. In light of the silencing of the other that is a feature of oppression, this thesis explores whether or not white writers can and/or should write in a black voice. Given that most white writers have no first-hand experience of oppression in conjunction with a largely prejudicial perception of the other predicated on their upbringing within an oppressive society most white writers are not able to write in a black voice.

The depictions of blackness within South African youth literature have not substantially changed over time. Many white South African writers continue to portray blacks either as stereotypes or as characters that provide a platform for the white character to vicariously experience oppression and inform the white readers of their understandings of blackness based on their observations. There remains very little substantive change in South African youth literature to reflect the significant changes that have taken place in the political arena between the years 1976 and 2006.

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Chapter 1 Introduction: Black Images in the White South African Imaginary

1.1 Aim

“White” writers, writing primarily for a white audience, have been the dominant producers of English youth novels in South Africa. “Black” characters have always featured in these novels in various roles and it has been acknowledged that in many instances these black characters serve to inform white readers about black existence in South Africa, or to reflect society by depicting “race”¹ relations in the country (Elwyn Jenkins 1993; Judith Bentley and Peter Midgely 2000; Judith Inggs 2002). South African political history not only informed but, indeed dictated the audiences that were being addressed by South Africa’s writers. White novelists were predisposed to addressing themselves to a white youth audience and this is reflected in the novels that are examined in this thesis. The increasing number of middle-class black families and the greater access to books and libraries within black communities would however suggest that there is an increasing number of black readers of these youth novels².

Until the realisation of independence in 1994, the nature of the relationship between blacks and whites in South Africa was largely confined to one of dominance and subservience, with

¹ This thesis acknowledges the fact that the term “race” is problematic and a disputed concept, which will be discussed further in chapters 2 and 3. However, because of the discursive convenience that is afforded by this term and in the absence of an alternative, I shall be using it throughout this thesis. In view of the frequency with which it will occur, I will not be putting it in inverted commas at every instance, and any further occurrence of it should be assumed to be in inverted commas. Similarly, the racial categories black and white, which also appear in inverted commas in this paragraph, are acknowledged to be problematic, but will be utilised because of their discursive convenience. In the absence of alternative terms that encapsulate these socio-historical categories of social groups, universally acknowledged to denote people who present with certain common external physiological characteristics. These terms will only appear in inverted commas in this paragraph due to their frequent occurrence. Additionally the definition of black does not encompass people who were historically referred to as coloured or Indian, this was done primarily to narrow the focus of the texts that could potentially be considered for analysis in terms of the featured characters. It is for this reason that the character of Joey in the novel *Spirit of the Mountain* by Shelley Davidow (1996) will not be used as an example of black representation and characterisation in this thesis.

² The Johannesburg City Library services have, for the last few years, been running a *Battle of the Books* competition to encourage reading among the youth. This competition is run through schools and libraries and is targeted at both black and white youths, and many of the books that are read in this competition are by white South African writers. The number of black schools and libraries in the township that participate in this competition clearly reflects the changing demographic of the readers of youth novels.

whites retaining control and privilege in every sphere of society. With the attainment of independence, there has been a shift in the power dynamics within the political arena. However, most other facets of society remain largely unchanged. The system of apartheid was an intentionally divisive political strategy aimed at keeping the various racial groups apart. The new political dispensation has introduced legislative changes that guarantee equality for all its citizens; however, it is the contention of this research that the realisation of these equalities remains illusory for most black South Africans. It is within this historical and social context of South Africa that the textual evaluations undertaken in this thesis have been framed.

This thesis seeks to evaluate the manner in which blackness is represented and depicted in South African English youth novels by white writers from 1976 until 2006. Novels written within this period are examined in order to ascertain whether the political changes that took place between 1976 and 2006 affected or influenced the representation of blackness in these novels. I have chosen 1976 as my starting point because of its historical significance in the struggle against apartheid. The Soweto uprisings of 1976 not only affected the political landscape of the country, but also influenced the thematic focus of the South African literary terrain. Increasingly more writers, both black and white, were writing stories that emphasised the racial oppression within the country imposed by the unjust apartheid regime.

The primary aim of this evaluation is to determine how the 'other' writes the 'other', in conjunction with the suggestion that a white writer is unable to depict black characters or the black condition accurately without elements of covert and even inadvertent stereotyping. This study examines how white writers depict blackness within their texts with the primary aim of looking at whether or not representations of blackness have changed concurrently with the changes in the socio-political arena. These changes are analysed by evaluating stereotyping as a representational tool, which is commonly used to depict black characters. Through textual analysis of novels written between 1976 and 2006, this thesis analyses the ways in which blackness is depicted in youth novels to determine whether or not the portrayal of black characters in stereotype alters in conjunction with the changes in the political arena.

The following questions, though they are not the actual research questions, informed the analytical process within this thesis:

1. How is blackness reflected within South African youth novels written by white writers?
2. Is it possible for white writers to adequately portray black characters in an attempt to illuminate black experiences, especially of racism?
3. In writing black characters, does the white writer presume to speak for, instead of merely write about, black people in society?
4. What function do the black characters serve within these novels?
5. In view of the fact that the majority of black readers would be middle-class black youths, are they able to identify with the black characters within these novels?
6. Do these novels manage to reflect blackness without succumbing to racial stereotyping, deliberately or otherwise?
7. Have the changes in South Africa's political arena affected the ways in which blackness is portrayed in South African texts?

The scrutiny of South African texts written by white writers for their representation of blackness and the black experience, and the various aspects pertaining thereto, is the principal focus of this study. The agency of the black populace in South Africa has always been denied because of their minority status within the social and political arena. This study therefore evaluates the treatment of black agency within white English-language writings in pre- and post-apartheid South Africa, with particular emphasis being placed on representational norms and, in particular, the use of stereotypes.

1.2 Rationale

The issue of race in South Africa has dominated every facet of the society to such an extent that it shall remain inextricably linked to every aspect of life for generations to come. Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in the literature that has been produced in this country. Whether justifying the racist policies of the apartheid regime or commending the reconciliatory stance of the new regime, or dealing with generic themes, the race question informs much of the writings by South Africans. Indeed the literature that has been written for

the youth market clearly demonstrates the lasting impact of the racial history of this country. Much of it reveals not only the centrality of race, but also the importance of literature, as a means of not just entertaining but communicating ideas that influence society. A direct effect of the racial history of South Africa is the dominance of whites in most spheres of life, and literature is no exception, and within the field of youth and children's literature, the majority of the writers are white. Given that race has been a thematic preoccupation for many of these writers and given the racial history of this country, this study evaluates how the other writes the other.

South Africa has, over the last eighteen years, made a relatively successful transition from apartheid to democracy. However, the historical realities of South African race relations under the system of apartheid have resulted in the continued pre-eminence of race in the national psyche. It is the contention of this thesis that despite efforts to encourage South Africans to conceive of themselves as a "rainbow nation"³, the issue of race still clouds any prospects of a unified populace. This lack of racial cohesion is evident in the ways in which race, in particular blackness, is presented in a number of youth novels. The political history of South Africa and its impact on interracial engagements and perceptions makes an interrogation of the ways in which blackness is reflected in youth literature especially important.

White South African writers have historically used their work variously, to uphold, reflect, interrogate, and even agitate against the racial politics that have dominated South African society. A significant number of these novels have included black characters in various roles and functions. However, it does not suffice that blackness is featured in these works; an interrogation of the manner in which it is done is of vital importance. The racial prejudice to which black South Africans were subjected has had a lasting influence on the ways in which blackness is perceived by both blacks and the other.

Black self-perception has historically been, and arguably continues to be, informed by the manner in which blackness is portrayed within white literature and white society. Several

³ This term was first used by Archbishop Desmond Tutu to describe South African society after the first democratic elections and it was subsequently popularised by Nelson Mandela.

critics such as Kelwyn Sole (1993), Andree-Jean Tötemeyer (1988c), David Ward (1989) and Andre Brink (1998) have argued that the realities of apartheid in South Africa render most white authors incapable of adequately capturing the black experience of it. The Bantuist⁴ tendencies that are applied in conjunction with othering discourses have resulted in continued white paternalistic engagements with blacks, thus denying blacks agency.

Additional to this is the issue of the expanding audiences for these books to include other racial groups. As mentioned, many of the growing black middle-class youths are reading and accessing these books on an ever-increasing scale and yet these books seldom reflect their reality. Bob Dixon (1977) emphasises the importance of readers being able to identify with what they read and to see themselves positively reflected in the literature. Tötemeyer concurs with this assertion (1988c), when she asserts that one of the fundamental aspects of literature for young adults is to provide them with not just representations of their reality, but opportunities to see themselves positively reflected in the literature. For the majority of black middle-class children in South Africa this is seldom the case as most of the black characters are poor, destitute, rural or homeless. While it is not suggested that the reality of the majority of the black population should not be reflected, it is however suggested that there are other realities to blackness than poverty and disempowerment.

John Stephens (1992: 68) on the other hand argues that it is not always ideal for the reader to identify with the focaliser of the book. He states that:

The present habit of stressing reader-focused approaches to text in combination with advocacy of identification with focalizers, inconsistent as this combination might be, is a dangerous ideological tool and pedagogically irresponsible. It fosters an illusion that readers are in control of the text whereas they are highly susceptible to the ideologies of the text, especially the unarticulated or implicit ideologies.

He suggests that when the reader internalises the subject position as determined by the text, as well as the perceptions and attitudes of the focaliser, the result is that the reader ends up identifying with the text and consequently the reader's perceptions and engagements with reality being informed by the text.

⁴ In this study, I introduce the term Bantuism to describe the appropriation of black agency. This will be discussed in detail in chapter 2.

The term discourse is, as Stephens (1992: 11) points out a “conveniently loose term” whose definition and application may vary with its usage. The definition of discourse that is used in this thesis is based on Foucault’s definition of discourse. In this definition the emphasis is on the function of discourse within the process of constructing knowledge and the fact that in the process of constructing knowledge it is undermined by the very process of that construction:

It is supposed therefore that everything that is formulated in discourse was already articulated in that semi-silence that precedes it, which continues to run obstinately beneath it, but which it covers and silences. The manifest discourse, therefore, is really no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say; and this ‘not-said’ is a hollow that undermines from within all that is said (2005: 28).

Foucault goes on to suggest that discourse not only defines what we know, but produces the object that is defined and emphasises the importance of history in discourse and the fact that the progression of time is concomitant with the change in discourse. Foucault places great emphasis on the fact that discourse has multiple functions within the field of knowledge production in that it not only defines, but produces knowledge, how topics are discussed and ideas put into practice (Hall 2001).

Hall’s (2007: 56) definition of discourse is greatly informed by Foucault and what makes it so apt for this thesis is that Hall’s definition applies specifically to representational discourses between the west and the rest of the world as:

a particular way of *representing* “the West”, “the Rest” and the relationship between them. A discourse is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – i.e. a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. When statements about a topic are made within a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way. It also limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed (*emphasis in original*).

The argument in this thesis is that novels under consideration perpetuate the denial of black agency. In continuing to voice black realities and attempting to capture black responses to the socio-political realities of South Africa, white writers maintain the appropriative discourses that were a feature of the apartheid era. The euphoria that greeted the realisation of independence in South Africa, and the relative ease with which the political transition was

achieved, has tended to gloss over the racial divides that continue to exist. The result of this has been a limited number of academic studies that address themselves to the issue of black representation.

Additionally, there continues to be a relatively small number of black writers writing youth or children's books. Economic realities and a tradition of writing struggle literature has left youth and children's literature largely ignored by most black writers, who are either unfamiliar with it or do not consider it to be as important as adult literature. Preoccupied, firstly, with writing against the colonial powers and then with the decolonisation of the adult mind post-independence, most African countries find themselves with a dearth of children's and youth literature, and this is equally true of South Africa. In view of this paucity in youth fiction it, therefore, becomes vitally important to take stock of the literature that is available for black youths and how it reflects blackness.

The history of South Africa and its apartheid policies has resulted in a divided society wherein people's perceptions of each other are filtered through various apartheid discourses through which all racial engagements are distilled. The myopic view of blackness and the divided society that was instituted by the apartheid regime resulted in a significant percentage of the white populace being largely ignorant of the realities faced by the black majority. It is for this reason that many writers of youth novels utilised their novels to create an awareness of the black condition while creating empathy in their white readers. Jenkins (1993: 133) elaborates on the ways in which authors used their writing to edify their white readership:

Through empathising with white characters, white readers can sense the hurt caused by apartheid, though they cannot realise the full depths of what it has inflicted. ... Their didactic thrust is to give young readers a view of South African history and current affairs that is not white-centred, to experience through the protagonists a different paradigm of human relations.

Whilst it is generally accepted that writers used their writings to provide their white readers with a greater awareness of black lives within an unequal and racist society, there is little evidence to indicate how successful they were in creating greater racial awareness and tolerance among their white readership, or indeed within society at large.

1.3 Literature Review

It has long been acknowledged that literature can have a significant influence on readers, informing and shaping the ways in which they perceive and respond to their society (Dixon 1977; Tötemeyer 1988b). It is because of the authority with which the written word is imbued that many writers over the course of history have attempted to use their writings to sway their readers' opinions and ideas. The near sacrosanct treatment of a book and its contents make literature the ideal vehicle for shaping and influencing the general populace. The youth, perhaps because they are regarded as the future and therefore contested terrain, tend to have didactic novels written for them with specific thematic pre-occupations (Jenkins 1993). The white youth in South Africa is no exception, and writers, throughout the history of this country, from both ends of the political spectrum, have attempted to shape their cognition of the racial politics of this country. However, in writing about race relations in this country, white writers not only write about the meaning and experience of being white in South Africa, but black meaning and experience as well.

Whilst there has been an increase in the levels of academic interest in youth literature over the years in many parts of the world, the same cannot be said for South African youth literature, which is still receiving very little academic attention. Many critics appear to conflate children's and youth novels although there are notable distinctions between the two.⁵ This conflation of the two literatures is perhaps reflective of the definitional difficulties that are repeatedly encountered in the continual efforts to distinguish and categorise literature. The nature of literature transcends the rather strict demarcations intended to distinguish writing for one age group from another. This is especially true of youth literature, for the writings that are classified as youth literature may be read by juveniles of widely ranging age groups. Additionally the intellectual and developmental maturity of the reader also plays a significant role in determining what kinds of books they are able to read.

⁵ Although I acknowledge the distinction between youth and children's literature, the theories that pertain to children's literature are, in the main, applicable to youth literature and during the writing of this study reference to children's literature and theories relating thereto will be assumed to include youth literature.

Michael Cart (1996: 9) points out that from 1930, when the American Library Association first published a list of the best books for young adults, the titles on that list were novels that were published either for the adult or children's market. It was only in 1973 that there was enough material written and published for the youth market to enable the association to make a selection exclusively from this category. He goes on to note, however, that despite there being a recognised body of literature that is intended for the youth market, the definition of what constitutes the youth or indeed youth literature defies precise definitions and categorisations.

In recent times literature has come to be regarded primarily as a source of escapist entertainment, but this has not always been the case. Prior to the advent of escapist novels, much of what was published served a didactic function. In South Africa in particular, some of the first publications were not only didactic but were, in addition, Christian-based or motivated (Jenkins 2002). This didactic or educative feature, although now largely absent from contemporary adult literature, is still a feature in youth and children's literature.

A number of critics such as Peter Hunt 1992; Karin Lesnik-Oberstein 1994 and Dixon 1977 are cognisant of the primacy of the educative function of children's and youth literature. Maria Nikolajeva (1996: 3) finds that "the educational aspects of reading have crucially influenced the evolution of children's literature and have gone hand in hand with pedagogical views of literature as a powerful means for educating children". According to Nikolajeva the preponderance of this aspect of children's and youth literature has led to an uncritical approach resulting in books being published simply because they meet this educative criterion while ignoring their lack of literary value.

It is, however, important to note that the strictly pedagogical facet of literature is not as significant in writings for the youth as it is considered to be in literature for children. What is considered more important within youth literature is how it deals with social themes, novels tend to be more socially aware, and tend to reflect or respond to the social and political realities of the country (K.R. Van Vuuren 1994). Dennis Butts (1992) however, points out that it is too deterministic to see literature as merely responding to social conditions. This

reductive approach precludes those works of literature, which actually question and even argue against the values and conditions of society. Inggs (2002) concurs with this feature of youth literature whereby the social realities are not directly reflected but are questioned nonetheless:

As an agent of social change, youth fiction in South Africa has played a major role in encouraging young people to question, and even reject, the moral basis of society, in contrast with other literatures, where the message has often been that young adults should accept the social institutions in which they live (Inggs 2002: 23).

Further to these already stated purposes of youth literature, Van Vuuren (1994) suggests that literature can also serve to project what would be considered the social ideal instead of the prevailing social realities or it can reveal those realities that are concealed or denied by the society. Whilst it is not being suggested that literature merely reflects social and political realities, the influence of one over the other cannot be denied, especially in a society where matters of race and politics dominate the society to the extent that they have throughout South African history. This is most clearly illustrated by South African writings that have invariably been affected by the politics of the country. Tötemeyer (1988a) notes that within Afrikaans literature, overt racism diminished significantly during the 1980s marking the changing political landscape of the country. Richard Rive (1988) also draws direct influential parallels between what was being written and what was transpiring in the political arena. Inggs (2002) and Jenkins (1993) also point out that the 1976 Soweto uprising enabled writers to include issues of politics and race within their writing, something that had not been possible before.

The final aspect of youth literature that has been pointed out by a number of theorists relates closely to its use as an educational vehicle. With specific reference to South African youth literature, it has been noted that many writers of youth novels who depict interracial engagement tend to use their writings to enable white readers,⁶ for whom they largely write, to have a better understanding of and possibly sympathy with the harsh realities faced by black people in this country (Tötemeyer 1988a; Inggs 2002). However, in an effort to voice the

⁶ Dixon (1977: 70) points out that children's literature is "written, published, reviewed and often sold by people with a middle class upbringing". A similar situation prevails within South African society where the majority of the middle class is made up of white people and it is for this group that most authors continue to write.

other for the edification of the white reader, little attention has been paid to either the nature of these portrayals or their impact on the other. The extensive use of stereotyping and the depiction of blacks as a disempowered other not only re-enforces these perceptions in the white reader, but also negatively affects the black reader in the process.

Studies done in England and America in the 1960s and 1970s found that children as young as four were not only racially aware, but were able to place value on race (Mary Ellen Goodman 1964; David Milner 1975; John Williams and Kenneth Morland 1976). These studies found that while white children showed strong race identity and acceptance, the same could not be said for black children, the majority of whom neither identified with nor accepted their blackness. These studies indicated that black children had absorbed at an early age the negative perception of blackness that was an elemental feature of their society. The overt racism that was practiced in both England and America at the time infused black children with a sense of inferiority and self-rejection. Dixon (1977: 116), in his study of racism in children's literature, concludes that:

The attitudes and values expressed in the kind of literature we have been considering naturally lead to this kind of self-rejection. When such warped concepts are presented through the powerful medium of literature, and reinforced by the child's environment and through other media, not forgetting geography and history texts in school, it isn't difficult to understand how such incidents⁷ happen. At the very least, a black child can find little to identify with in literature and little that is recognisable as her or his own culture.

In a society that places an intrinsic value on literature, it is not surprising that black children would absorb the subversive racism that is at times present in a great number of books for children. Although it is not being suggested that books alone have led to black children having a negative image of themselves, the power of the printed word should not be underestimated. Dixon goes on to add that especially where children's literature is concerned, the subtlety and symbolic nature of racism in children's literature makes it difficult to combat unless one uses similar approaches, that is subtle and symbolic negations of racism and the depictions of blackness.

⁷ The incidents that Dixon is referring to are the tests that were conducted on a group of children which revealed that black children neither identify with nor accept their own blackness to a point where some of them even claimed to be white.

In an effort to combat negative stereotypes many writers tend to create positive stereotypes, which are nevertheless still stereotypes and not very useful in a society trying to reach a state of racial familiarity. Another strategy that is commonly utilised to realise this end is the dropping of racial epithets so that the ordinariness of the characters is emphasised (Jenkins 1993: 136). Inggs (2000) also notes that within South African youth novels, this effort to dispense with racial appellations has resulted in an increasing number of novels that deal with the protagonist's search for their identity as a South African and not as a black, white, coloured or Indian person. However, she goes on to add that even though the search for the self is now directed at a national rather than racial identity, within many of these texts the white child still dominates the black child, thus nullifying the unifying aspect of the text.

Van Vuuren (1994: 8), however, is of the opinion that it is possible for South Africa to produce an indigenous literature that is:

African-centred and that promotes African values and standards rather than continue the importing of exotic literature that has different sets of values that an African (a child born in Africa, not necessarily a black child) child might find alienating.

Van Vuuren's statement suggests that values exist that would apply to all African children regardless of race and culture and that it is possible to speak to such values. It is the contention of this thesis that such values do not exist. Any value that is universally applicable to Africa with its linguistic, racial and cultural differences would be a universal value that would apply not just to Africa, but the entire world.

Another method for combating racist literature that is discussed by Van Vuuren (1994: 9) is anti-bias literature, that is, literature that is intended to "create a more equal society in the future through the production of 'self-consciously correct' reading matter". She feels, however, that this attempt to correct the bias that is found in children's stories has its own problems, the most significant of which is that writers may then infuse it with their own "civilised and civilising ideas". Whilst concurring with her assertion that literature is invariably informed by the writer's own ideologies, however, her suggestion that this type of literature is potentially harmful is not accepted. This rejection of her assertion is predicated on

the fact that she fails to give clear illustration of the harm that could be wrought by this approach. In addition, it suggests that the status quo of stereotyping and negative misrepresentation is preferable.

Tötemeyer (1988c) found that Americans, in order to contend with the negative stereotyping of blackness, began to write stories featuring middle-class black families. However, she warns that American writers were soon faced with another problem: in resolving the negative stereotyping of black characters, they merely imposed white middle-class values on the black characters, thus negating the singularity of their blackness and how their experience of racism had informed their own value systems. A non-racist outlook does not however, mean a negation of cultural relativism and racial realities. Universalist espousals are associated with colonial and post-colonial liberal discourses, which reject cultural relativism while failing to acknowledge the fact that the universality they advocate is defined and based on white western culture (Chinua Achebe 2000).

Lesnik-Oberstein (1994) also warns against the notion of the universality of children's literature, for whilst a story may appeal to an unlimited and varied audience, it does not make the background that informs the story itself universal. The racial, cultural, social and political reality of the writer informs the point of view and the thematic preoccupation of the writing. Clare Bradford (2001) also notes that in most instances when speaking of universality, most western critics will be referring to discourses that are either white or a close approximation thereof and, in the process subverting other cultures and races under western culture which, being the dominant culture, is assumed to be the universal culture.

Peter Hunt (1991) rightly points out that children's stories, like the writers themselves, are not ideologically neutral - no literature or writing is ideologically neutral, after all. The motives that propel writers, publishers and even parents are informed by their various ideologies determined by their backgrounds and upbringing, and all of these influence their ideological standpoint.

1.4 Theoretical framework

In this thesis, I am introducing the term “Bantuism”⁸ as a discursive regime for interrogating the appropriation of black agency by whites in choosing to speak *for* them as opposed to *about* them. The term Bantuism is derived from the word *Bantu*, which historically refers to a linguistic group that was first identified in the 1850s by Wilhelm Bleek. This word is also the Nguni word for people (Saul Dubow 1995). However, this word was appropriated by the apartheid regime, redefined, and used to refer only to black people, and its use, in various pieces of anti-black legislation, and its definitional distortion turned it into a pejorative term. In tracing the historical usage and definition of this term, one is also able to follow the history of white engagement with the black population in South Africa.

The Bantuist approach vests the white voice with superior knowledge about, and power over, the voiceless black for whom it presumes to speak. Bantuism is a common feature of both colonial and post-colonial discourses. The distinction between colonial and post-colonial Bantuism is that in the former case, non-African civilisations and systems of knowledge were considered superior to African ones, entitling and enabling colonisers pre-eminence and dominion over their colonised subjects. In the latter case, the formerly colonised subject, though now a free agent, is still thought to require the protective guidance of the Bantuist to determine and voice their needs and interests. This appropriative approach is what Achebe (2000: 43) refers to as “the colonization of one people’s story by another”, wherein the other vocalises the history and the literary products of the colonised other. The continuing domination of the West over Africa is indicative of the prevailing power relations that were established during the colonial era, and that predetermined the nature of the relationship and engagement that currently exists.

Said (2003) discusses the ways in which the occident engages with the Oriental, assuming the role and function of defining the Oriental and their culture. He points out that our perception and understanding of the orient are western constructs reflecting the occident’s interpretation

⁸ Bantuism is informed by Orientalism and Aboriginalism but is distinguishable from them in its origins, inceptions and application, and is discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

of the orient. Through academia, the arts, and literature, the idea of the orient has been constructed and established as fact by the west, in what he refers to as “a system of knowledge” (6) established by the occident about the Oriental. He adds that it is not the veracity of the representation that is the primary area of concern, but rather the unequal power-relations that make this appropriation of agency possible. This construct of the orient is possible because a “relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (5) exists between the Oriental and the occident.

What is significant about the scenario that is depicted by Said is that it applies to all relationships wherein there is unbalanced power and where one group is dominant or conceives of itself as superior. Michel Foucault (1980) emphasizes the significance of the power/knowledge axis in relationships where one party dominates the other, utilizing their control of power to construct knowledge and simultaneously utilizing that knowledge to retain power. The construction of the oppressed other is determined by the dominant group, enabling a representation of the other that is dictated by the interests of the dominator. These constructs serve to portray the other in a manner that is consistent with their inferior status and therefore justifies their oppression. It is in this process of representation and construction that the agency of the other is appropriated, concretising the disequilibrium in the power dynamics.

In this thesis the term black voice is used specifically to refer to the agency of the black other in which is vested the power to define and express their own (hi)story. However, this power/right to self-definition and expression has been greatly undermined by the unequal power relationship that exists between black and white. And it is this relationship that has made it possible for blackness to be constructed, defined and expressed by the white other. Said (2003) and Foucault (1980) both delineate the process of the disempowerment of the other and the appropriation of their voice because of this unequal power dynamic. As a result of this silencing Spivak (1988) is forced to question whether or not the subaltern even have the capacity for self-expression and definition. The suggestion that the white other has subsumed the black other's power to speak is consistent with this type of relationship wherein the balance of power is firmly tipped in favour of one party, enabling the wielder of power to

represent the other, an assertion that is affirmed by Karl Marx and Albert Engels (n.d.), Franz Fanon (1986), Njabulo Ndebele (1991) and Natasha Distiller and Melissa Steyn (2004).

Clare Bradford (2001) Lorenzo Veracini (2003), Robert Hodge and Vijay Mishra (1992), Bain Attwood (1992), Kay Anderson and Colin Perrin (2008) and Mark Harris (1996) use the term Aboriginalism to refer to the same appropriative regime that exists between Australian Aboriginals and white Australians. These scholars of Aboriginal/white relations in Australia point out that the general tendency of appropriative discourses is to be messianic in their compulsion to save traditional cultures from the distorting effects of western civilization, thus denying the dynamism of culture. This resistance to change is applied without regard to whether or not the changes are initiated from within. Any western influences that are assimilated into the culture are viewed as a bastardisation of the culture and these discourses undertake to preserve the culture in its pure, though static, form. This assumption of the role of the voice and saviour of a potentially lost tribe denies the indigenous people agency, which is then vested with the Aboriginalist/Orientalist/Bantuist.

This annexation of the agency of indigenous people brings us back to the point raised by Inggs (2002) about the appropriative nature of white writers writing about the cultures and experiences of another race or community they do not belong to, nor have first-hand experience of. This raises several questions seeking to respond to the issue of appropriation: Who has the right to speak for the other? Under what circumstances is that right assumed to be accessible? Is it necessary to have first-hand experience of anything to be able to write about it? Do these appropriative discourses always apply when an author writes the other, or only when the other is of a different race to the author?

Moloney (1994), when questioned about his right to write from an Aboriginal perspective, stated that he felt himself not only able, but entitled to do so, as

[i]t never occurred to me that anyone would question my right to write a story about Aboriginal characters ... I was just trying to write from the heart. I experienced certain things: I saw certain things: I took part in certain things.” (Moloney 1994 as cited in John Foster, Ern Finnis and Maureen Nimon 1995: 44).

Niki Daly, like Moloney, does not see anything appropriative or inappropriate in writing in a black voice. He states:

I am saddened when it is suggested that White people ought not to do books that feature Black people. ... Of course, there are those who believe that writers ought to stay firmly in their own skin and culture in order to write “authentically” (Daly 2002: 39).

Inggs (2002: 26) notes that the writing of the stories of other communities by non-members of those communities will only become possible once greater levels of integration have been realised.⁹ It is important to point out that it is not the inclusion of black characters that is in contention, but, rather the way in which this is done. The disparate power relations between black and white in South Africa tend to be reflected in the literary representations of blackness in stereotype.

Although the terms black and blackness¹⁰ are used to denote a particular race group, it would be negligent and misleading not to acknowledge that this term does not denote a homogeneous group. Vast differences of language, culture, and history distinguish one “black” group from another. However, more important than emphasizing the heterogeneity of blacks in South Africa, and indeed anywhere, it is crucial to point out that blackness is a racial category that is a historical, social and political construct. David Roediger (1991), whilst looking at whiteness, affirms the constructivist nature of race. “Race cannot be seen as a biological or physical fact (a ‘thing’) but must be seen as a notion that is profound and in its very essence ideological. Race ... is then entirely socially and historically constructed as an ideology in a way that class is not” (Fields as cited in Roediger 1991: 7). This assertion is reinforced by other race theorists such as Michael Omi (2001), Howard Winant (2000), Joe Feagin (2006), John

⁹ Although the issue of the appropriateness of white writers writing black characters is central to this study, it is noted that throughout history writers have written about groups to which they do not belong, be it gender, age or circumstance. However, the power dynamics and the nature of the engagement between males and females, though arguably unequal, are not comparable to that which has existed between black and white for centuries. In addition to the social and political disequilibrium that exists between the two races, the brutality of the realities of slavery, colonialism and apartheid that have informed black/white relations place interracial engagements outside other forms of inequality.

¹⁰ The heterogeneity of whiteness is also acknowledged as is the fact that, like blackness, this racial category is a historical, social and political construct.

Solomos and Les Back (1999), Coco Fusco (2003), Colette Guillaumin (1999), Lucius T. Outlaw Jr. (1996), George M. Fredrickson (2002) and John A. Powell (1999).

Blackness can connote any number of things depending on the variables that pertain to the user of the term. However, the nature of the engagement between the black race and, in particular, the Western world has resulted in largely negative or inferior connotations attaching to blackness as an ideological construct, while the reverse is true of whiteness. Race theorists argue that the historical subjugation of blacks necessitated the construction of blackness, and the ideology of whiteness necessitated one of blackness. Ergo, if whiteness is to be a desirable end in itself then it must have an opposite non-desirable blackness, and if black oppression is to be justified white superiority must be revealed.

However, the ideology of blackness should not be confused with black identity. Whereas the ideology is an exterior construction that reflects social, historical and political prejudices, identity is primarily an interior process. Stuart Hall, David Held and Tony McGrew (1992) argue that identity is formed in the interaction between the self and the cultural world in which the self exists through a process of internalising the values and meanings defined by a cultural and social world.

Identity arises, not so much from the fullness of identity which is already inside of us as individuals, but from a lack of wholeness which is 'filled' from outside us, by the ways we imagine ourselves to be seen by others (Hall et al. 1992: 287).

The fluidity and multiplicity of our current social and cultural reality has resulted in a post-modern subject whose identity is equally multiple and fluid. However, he goes on to add that modernity has resulted in 'dislocation'¹¹, that is, the centre is dislocated and has not been replaced by another, resulting in multiple centres. This is especially true of most societies, including South Africa, where the black populace has had to contend with not only the changes within their own culture, but the realities of apartheid and the encroaching Westernised global culture. This relationship between the cultural world and the internal process is explored by Paul Gilroy (1993) as he looks at black identity formation not only

¹¹ Hall et al.'s use of this term is derived from Ernesto Laclau (1990).

within a particular historical context, but also a cultural one that is not historically a black cultural or social context.

Dislocated black identities in conjunction with externally constructed identities within an oppressive socio-political context and a historical dislodging have resulted in a complex shift in black identity. Attempts by white writers to encapsulate such a depth of complexity have been largely unsuccessful due to their inability to access the multi-dimensional facets of black identity and their influence. Various ways in which this has occurred will be explored throughout this thesis through the analysis of novels.

1.5 Methodology

As the representation of race is the primary focus of this study, race analysis discourse informed the analysis of the selected texts. Tötemeyer (1988c) numerates racial syndromes as elaborated on by Jörg Becker (1977), which she describes as symptomatic in writers who deal with racial issues.

- The avoidance syndrome in which the writer avoids altogether the problems that arise as a result of racial differences.
- The dehistorisation syndrome where black history is submerged under a white perspective of history thus alienating black readers from their own history.
- The harmonisation syndrome where the writer acknowledges the existence of race but glosses over the problems that arise as a result, or assumes a patronising attitude towards the black characters with excessive sympathy.
- The apartheid syndrome in which the writer presents as inevitable the dissolution of interracial friendships without questioning why this has to be.

Tötemeyer (1988c) goes on to list guidelines to identify racism in literature. This list is derived from research conducted in a number of countries and published in the *Children's Book Bulletin* by the World Council of Churches (1979). These guidelines informed the analytical strategy that was used to assess the texts within this study. They ask the following questions:

- Do the white characters have leading roles and are they always dominant and paternalistic? Do the black characters have no name, surname or personality?
- If the main character is black, are they admired for behaving like whites or because they have done something to benefit the white characters?
- Are the black characters unfavourably compared with their white counterparts without insight on their way of life being provided?
- Is black poverty presented as being the fault of black people or does the book attempt to explain the situation?
- Who is considered responsible for armed conflict between the racial groups and how are these acts of aggression explained?
- If the book is illustrated, are the black characters illustrated as stereotypes or illustrated as whites with colour?
- Do the blacks speak at all in the story and when they do, do they use broken English?
- Is there any character in the book that a black child could readily identify with?

These guidelines provided a strategic and even-handed approach to the analysis of the texts examined in this thesis, and were a means of delineating more accurately an analytical focus during the evaluation of the novels. Though useful in their own right, these guidelines are used as just that, with critical discretion being used to determine the intentions of the author. In order to analyse not only the way in which blackness is represented within the selected texts, but also its effect, I examined a variety of storytelling devices that enabled a secondary understanding of a text. John Stephens (1992) provides a concise methodology for the analysis of children's stories through the assessment of specific elements within a story. I used various elements of Stephens' approach to inform the analysis of the novels discussed in this thesis.

The first of these elements is language. The importance of language within a story is of obvious yet primary importance, as it is the vehicle for telling the story. However, the manner in which language is utilised within a novel can reveal the assumptions and ideology of the writer as well as reveal the implied reader thereof. The manner in which the black characters are portrayed along with their interactions with the other characters was examined using language. An illuminating facet of language within a story is not simply the way it is used to

tell the story, but also the ways in which the characters use it in direct speech. Of equal importance within the analysis was looking at how black characters spoke, if they spoke at all, and if the way they spoke English was different from that of the white characters.

This study closely evaluates the narrative methods of the selected texts as a means of further examining the portrayal of blackness. Within textual analysis, the point of view of the narrative is important, that is the perspective and interpretation of events that the reader is given. By analysing the point of view from which the story is focalised, we are able to ascertain who sees and how they see the events that are unfolding within the text. Through this process it is possible to determine whether or not their perception is filtered through the ideological assumptions of the writer. This particular method is instructive in revealing how white writers, through their characters, perceive the reality of blackness and its attendant difficulties within the South African context. This is especially true in those novels where the white writer uses a black character to advance their story.

Through this analysis it was possible to determine how white writers who write from a black point of view perceive black people's experiences of the social and political realities of this country, enabling an evaluation of the other written by, and through, the perspective of the other. Stephens (1992) distinguishes between two different points of view; the first he terms the perceptual point of view, being the point of view of the narrator of the story or a character within the story. The second point of view is the conceptual point of view, which involves all intratextual interpretations of events or the actions of other characters, and includes interpretations based on the ideology of the focaliser.

The point of view from which the story is written is sometimes an indication of who the implied reader is. Stephens defines the implied reader as a hypothetical reader that is derived from a text's own structure who is able to derive the meaning of the text based on the clues that the text itself provides. This enables a distinction to be drawn between the implied and actual reader of a text. The implied reader, according to this definition, would therefore be the imagined reader that the writer is presumably targeting when writing the text. Because it is assumed that a large number of the texts that are discussed in this thesis were intended to

inform and educate the white populace about the black condition, it is imperative to try and determine whom the texts are actually intended for. The issue of subjectivity becomes especially important when one is considering the actual readers of a text and whether or not they see themselves reflected in the text. I contend that the kinds of black characters that appear in the texts analysed in this thesis do not mirror the reality of the majority of the actual black readers of the texts.

Through the examination of these various facets of a story, it was possible to analyse how the other is perceived by another, and more specifically how blackness and the black condition is presented within South Africa and its literature. These particular features of any story are not only the vehicles through which the story is told, but are similarly the location of discourse and ideology, whether defined clearly within the telling of the story or concealed beneath the primary understanding of the text.

In this study, I undertook a close textual analysis of South African youth novels written in English by white writers from 1976 until 2006, in order to examine the manner in which blackness is portrayed within the various texts. I selected six novels as the central texts for my analysis; three novels were drawn from the apartheid era starting from 1976, while the remaining three were post-independence novels, ending in 2006. The novels from the apartheid era are Toeckey Jones' (1979) *Go Well Stay Well*, *Cageful of Butterflies* (1989) by Lesley Beake and *Cry Softly Thule Nene* by Shirley Bojé (1992). The post-apartheid novels are *The Red-Haired Khumalo* by Elana Bregin (1994), *Spirit of the Mountain* by Shelly Davidow (1996) and *The White Giraffe* by Lauren St John (2006). I chose to restrict the number of novels to six in order to allow for close textual analysis rather than a more generalised overview of a large number of texts. However, examples are drawn from a significant number of other novels, and this was felt to be necessary in order to illustrate certain points or to draw general conclusions, which it is not possible to do with only six novels.

All six of these novels depict relationships of friendship or close emotional ties between the black and white characters. I specifically chose them because in order to illustrate the

representations of blackness the novels analysed needed to include black characters that were more than fleeting. I have analysed youth fiction written only by white South African authors and writing about South African issues. I confined my selection of novels to those written by white writers, because the primary aim of the study was to assess how blackness is depicted by the other and in order to do this, it was necessary to look exclusively at texts by white writers. The exploration of the black characters' relationship with the white characters that was outside of the servant/master paradigm also enabled a juxtapositional comparison of the characters and their treatment by the author. By comparing the manner in which characters of the two different race groups were portrayed a clearer understanding of black representation was possible.

I excluded from this thesis novels written by writers who are not white; novels that do not feature any black characters; novels that only feature characters of one racial group, and novels that feature very minimal interaction between blacks and whites. I have also restricted the definition of black to the historical definition, which is not as inclusive as the current definition. Therefore, people who were originally defined as coloured or Indian are not included in this thesis, either as authors or as characters to be analysed. I also selected a novel from each significant political and historical phase in order to be able to explore the influence of the political environment on the writings being produced at the time.

These particular dates were chosen because of their political significance. On the one hand 1976 marks the beginning of the youth-led political uprisings, and since the study is looking at literature intended for the youth, it was seen as crucial to map the ways in which this literature developed, especially with regard to how blackness was perceived by white writers in concurrence with the changing political scene. On the other hand, 2006 marks twelve years of independence for the country, so the study also evaluated the impact that democracy and the new political dispensation have had on the literary depiction of blackness by white writers in the country. The political environment in South Africa has always had a significant influence on the literary landscape, producing reflective, idealistic and even oppositional discourses.

Having selected the relevant texts for the study, I analysed them through a scrutiny of their language, narrative structure, and point of view, placing emphasis on stereotyping as a depictional mode for black characters. I also use Bantuist discourses and literary theories as part of my analysis, in addition to evaluating how the political and social realities of the country have influenced the manner in which race is presented in these books by providing a historical overview of the socio-political realities of the country. By juxtaposing the literature of the various decades with the socio-political situation, I was able to analyse the extent to which the national condition impacted on the writing of the day.

1.6 Chapter Outline

Chapter One introduces the study, providing an overview of the undertaking, including the aim, rationale and methodology, as well as the limitations of the study. In the second chapter, the theoretical framework of the study is elaborated upon; it is in this chapter that the theory of Bantuism is introduced and explored. This concept delineates the ways in which race relations have developed in South Africa along a political trajectory, and how they have had an overarching effect on every other facet of society. Informed by Said's Orientalism and Hodge and Mishra's Aboriginalism, Bantuism argues that the history of the inequitable power relations between blacks and whites has enabled the construction of blackness and the simultaneous appropriation of black agency. This appropriation of agency is illustrated through the literature produced in South Africa over the decades. One of the motives among white writers for writing about the black condition is to provide their white readership with a better understanding of the realities of black lives. However, in the process of their writing, it is asserted, these writers have tended to presume superior knowledge and to write for, instead of about, blackness.

Chapter Two also discusses the construction of race as a historical and socio-political construct that is a function of the requirements of the dominant group within the society. The construction of blackness is also analysed and historicised to provide a clear understanding of the functionality of the race and its construction. The ways in which the depiction of blackness changes over time are discussed as illustrative of the utilitarian nature of race.

Continuing from the discussion of the construction of race in Chapter Two, Chapter Three argues that one of the fundamental ways in which blackness is constructed and maintained is through stereotyping. This chapter traces the foundations of stereotyping and its use as a means of subjugation and creating prejudice. It highlights the symbiotic relationship between the formulation of race and the establishment of stereotypes, arguing that one is necessary for the other to exist. This chapter goes on to delineate a number of common stereotypes that are a recurring feature in South African youth literature, suggesting that more often than not, at least one of these stereotypes will be attributed to a black character featured in a novel written by a white writer.

The relationship between the socio-political realities of a country and the literature it produces has always been a significant aspect of literary study. Chapter Four looks at how the changes in the socio-political fortunes of South Africa have influenced and impacted on the youth literature produced by white writers. This chapter provides a historical overview in order to illustrate the significance of politics on literature in South Africa. Focusing on the legislation instituted by the apartheid regime specifically to control literary production, this chapter traces the history of the writer's involvement in South African politics, which simultaneously reflects on the influence of politics on the literature that was produced. This chapter also provides a clear understanding of the significance of the June 16th, 1976 youth uprising and the ways it revolutionised writing in South Africa, particularly among white writers.

The pre-apartheid novels studied in Chapter Five are Toeckey Jones' (1979) *Go Well Stay Well*, *Cageful of Butterflies* by Lesley Beake (1989) and *Cry Softly Thule Nene* by Shirley Bojé (1992). This chapter looks closely at how black characters are depicted, paying particular attention to the use of stereotyping in these portrayals. Particular attention is given to the relationships between the black and white characters and how these reflect or affect the portrayal of blackness. This focus on stereotyping ties in with the discussion in chapter three of how stereotypes are used within society and how they are re-enforced within the literature. Authorial ideology and literary techniques are also looked at, as suggested by the text in the process of analysing the portrayal of blackness. Issues of point of view, focalisation and vocalisation are all facets of the novels included in the process of analysis. Attention is paid to

the era in which the novels were written and how this influences the themes of the novels in question. Additional texts are also looked at in furtherance of the arguments pertaining to the analysis of the three primary texts.

The post-apartheid novels analysed in Chapter Six are *The Red-Haired Khumalo* by Elana Bregin (1994), *Spirit of the Mountain* by Shelly Davidow (1996) and *The White Giraffe* by Lauren St John (2006). The approach in this chapter is similar to that of chapter five, in that I undertook a close textual analysis of the selected novels. Again, the literary devices that were used to advance the story were studied to determine what these reveal about the writers' perceptions of blackness, and how this informed the ways in which blacks were depicted within the texts. Theme, language and point of view continued to be analysed in chapter six, including the issue of stereotyping and the representation of black/white interaction. Again, the political context in which the novels were written was taken into account, looking at the ways in which this influenced the novels. As in chapter five, other novels were also included in the analytical process, either as examples, or to enhance various aspects of the central argument.

Chapter seven is the final chapter of the thesis, which concludes that, despite the significant changes in the political sphere in South Africa, representations of blackness continue to be marginal and stereotyped. The general shift away from race as a theme has resulted in an emphasis on other areas considered to be of interest to the youth. However, the underlying racial issues that still affect South African society are discernible in the literature that continues to be produced, especially in the way in which blackness is depicted.

1.7 Limitations of the study

One of the main limitations of the study was the process of selecting the novels for the close textual analysis. For certain periods, like the 1970s, the selection was very limited because of the difficulties in securing youth novels written in that period, most of which are now out of print. The selection for turn of the century novels, though wide, was equally limiting in that

very few of the novels met the requirements of my selection process, reflecting the increasing shift in thematic interest from race to more generic themes of interest for youth readers.

Another limitation of the research was in defining youth literature; because of the widely encompassing definition of youth, particularly in South Africa, the selection of writings defined as youth literature is equally wide. In the process of narrowing the selection (in addition to the criteria for selection that I have already elaborated on), I excluded from consideration any literature written for early-educational purposes for teenage readers or for second-language English speakers, and any materials that had illustrations.

Within this study, it is crucial to emphasise that whilst speaking as though blackness were ‘universalisable’, delineating what blackness and identity connote to so varied a group is not possible in such a study, and therefore generalisations were necessary. The lack of precision in discussions about race was another limitation of this thesis, and while attention was paid to race discourses it was not possible to speak of individual linguistic groups of people, unless pertinent to the discussion, and therefore generalisations about the various racial groups were used in the analytical process.

The final limitation of this thesis was in determining what constitutes South African literature. There are many and varied ways in which a national literature is identified. Mabel Segun (1992: 25) asks the following questions with regard to identifying national literatures, though she conveniently neglects to provide answers: “What is African Children’s literature? Is it literature written by Europeans for African children? Is it literature written by African authors for African Children?” The fact that she does not provide answers is perhaps an indication of the difficulty in defining a national literature. However, Teresa Meniru (1992: 43) does not suffer from Segun’s indecisiveness and states that African children’s literature refers to “literature written for African children by African authors either in the vernacular or in a foreign language”. While this definition is sufficiently broad to encompass much of the literature produced in South Africa, Meniru’s definition also runs the potential risk of getting bogged down in a definitional tussle over who is an African.

For fear of limiting myself within an already narrow field of study, I have included in my definition of South African texts any book that has South Africa as its setting, written by any author who is not necessarily South African by birth but resident in the country. I acknowledge that this definition is at risk of being regarded as being too inclusive, but I believe that the contribution to South African literature that has been made by non-South Africans writing and living in South Africa is not only quite considerable, but can justifiably be regarded as South African literature.

It is important to emphasise the significance of theory within this work as a vital contributing evaluation tool in the analysis and reading of the texts. This study is not meant to be a mere critical appraisal of the selected texts. Indeed, there is real danger within this work of falling into the trap in which Nikolajeva (1996) finds most critics of children's and youth literature so readily fall, that of focusing on and emphasising the didactic or other function of the text to the total exclusion of its evaluation as a work of literature. Literary theory was utilised primarily to analyse dialogue, narrative structure, and point of view, in order to provide a clearer assessment of the question this study set out to answer.

Chapter 2: Bantuism, Race Construction and Representation

2.1 Writing South Africa

Of the various social and political issues that plague South African society, race continues to be one of the most divisive¹. Despite the post 1994 democratic election “rainbow nation” euphoria, and the subsequent depiction of South African society as unified under the colour blind embrace of the new democratic government, the legacy of Apartheid’s inherent racial prejudices and injustices remain. It is indisputable that many changes have occurred within the racial arena in South Africa especially with regard to the opening up of many erstwhile restricted political and economic spheres². However, these changes have served only to mask the lack of real and inclusive transformation, and have indeed resulted in an unwillingness to acknowledge the rather superficial nature of the changes that have actually occurred thus far³. The limited nature of the changes that have transpired to date is reflected in the literature also, which has, since 1994, moved increasingly away from race as a theme.

¹ This continuing racial tension is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the media coverage of two prominent political figures in the country: Julius Malema the former president of the African National Congress Youth League and the murdered Eugene Terreblanche who was the leader of the Afrikaner white supremacist Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB). Julius Malema has repeatedly come under fire for making what are considered to be racist comments and inciting racial tension in the country including the singing of an old anti-apartheid song which was subsequently banned by a High Court ruling that found Malema guilty of hate speech. The racial tension that Malema’s utterances have caused are matched by similar tensions escalating as a result of the murder of Eugene Terreblanche by two of his farm workers after a pay dispute. Suggestions were made that the song sung by Malema that contained the line “Kill the Boer” was partly responsible for the murder of Terreblanche by his farm workers. The result of these various incidences was to reveal the gash in South African society that has been barely concealed by the rainbow coloured plaster that was placed on it. (For press coverage of both the Malema and Terreblanche stories see: Malefane 2010; News24 2010; Times live 2010; BBC News 2010a; BBC News 2010b; Berger 2010).

² According to a Unilever Institute study undertaken in 2005 there was an estimate 2 million black people comprising the middle class referred to as Black Diamonds. This number is said to have increased to 2.6 million in 2007. However they comprise a mere 10% of the entire black population but are responsible for 43% of black consumer spending power valued at an estimated R250 billion in 2008 (Van Eyk 2008). See also (Isa 2009; Herman 2006; South Africa Info 2007).

³ According to Statistics South Africa’s General Survey of 2007 there has been an improvement in people’s access to health care, education, housing, clean water and electricity between the years 2002 and 2007 (Lehohla 2007). See also Lawrence Schlemmer and Valerie Møller (1997) in their interpretative analysis of the data from the household survey and the implications for South Africans. These findings however belie the realities faced by average South Africans as numerous COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) strikes against increasing electricity tariffs and the rising cost of living would seem to suggest. (Van Hoorn 2008; Barbara Slaughter 2007; Mahlabla 2010). See also Statistics South Africa 2008; Lehohla 2007, and www.statssa.gov.za. For a detailed view of the various protests that have been taking place in South Africa see the SA Social Protest Observatory <http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/default.asp>.

The writing and publishing of youth literature in South Africa has historically been the domain of white writers and publishers, and arguably remains so⁴. What has changed over the years is the greater inclusion of black characters in these books and the roles that they play within the various novels. However, the detailed discussion of the textual representation of blackness within youth literature is dealt with in Chapters 3, 5 and 6. What this chapter concentrates on are the underlying assumptions and ideologies behind black representation and depiction by white writers through the discursive vehicle of Bantuism. Largely informed by the works of Edward Said (2003) and Robert Hodge and Vijay Mishra⁵ (1992) and their theories of “Orientalism” and “Aboriginalism” respectively, this chapter introduces the theory of Bantuism to refer to the manifestation of the nature of race representation and appropriation within the South African context.

The issue of race and representation cannot, however, be discussed in a vacuum. It is imperative to interrogate the nature of the construction of race within a socio-political context.

⁴ According to surveys conducted by the Publishers Association of South Africa (PASA), between 2002 and 2006, the publishing industry continues to be white dominated. Although in number terms there were more black people permanently employed in the publishing industry than white in 2005 a closer analysis of the figures reveals that at the time when the survey was conducted whites continued to control the industry. Whites held more than 70% of the senior management positions; more than 60% of middle management positions; 64% of the editorial positions and over 64% of all jobs in production and design. The sectors of the industry that showed greater percentages of black employees are marketing and sales (61%), administration (71%), finance (71%), information technology (54%) and the category labelled ‘other’ which is largely cleaning staff and menial workers (99%). From these figures it is clear that the decision making power still vests largely with whites. This is further affirmed by the number of publishing houses that are majority black owned, according to the PASA survey of the 27 participating publishers only five of them were majority black owned. The dominance of white writers is also reflected in the 2005 survey that gives a racial breakdown of authors based on the numbers of writers receiving royalties from the participating publishers. According to these figures black writers in the field of education were 42.54% of the totals number of writers with their white counterparts making up the remaining 57.46%. The disparities in the figures for trade publishing and academic and professional writing are even more glaring with white writers making up 85.18% and 82.87% respectively with black writers making up the remaining 14.82% and 17.13% respectively. Books written in English make up 71.92% of all locally published book sales, Afrikaans is a distant second making up 18.63% of the market share and the remaining 9.44% is the sales of books written in all nine of the official indigenous languages (of the indigenous language book sales isiZulu is the highest seller and TsiVenda is the lowest). It should be noted that the English language figures include black authors that write in English but it is unlikely that they make up the majority of writers writing in English. These figures clearly reflect the continued dominance of whites within the publishing industry enabling them to continue to influence literary tastes and trends.

⁵ Mishra and Hodge discuss their theory of Aboriginalism in their book entitled *Dark Side of the Dream*. However in this thesis I shall be using other theorists’ elaboration of their theory which includes the insights and interpretations of these other theorists.

Theories about race and its construction serve to problematise not only our limited understanding of race, but also the socially encoded understanding of race. In a society where the notions of race and racial difference have, for generations, been accepted as the norm, it becomes crucial to critically analyse not only the nature of the construction of race, but the motivation behind it. It is the contention of this thesis that an examination of the process of the fictionalising of the other and the appropriation of their voice would be incomplete without a concurrent exploration of the construction of race itself from whence all else stems.

2.2 Orientalism, Aboriginalism and Bantuism

2.2.1 Orientalism

Said defines Orientalism as the “Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient” (Said 2003: 3). He emphasises the on-going nature of the Orientalist project that is invested with much energy and resources in its construction:

Orientalism ... [is] a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied – indeed, made truly productive – the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into general culture (2003: 6).

Two points that Said raises in his treatises inform an important part of the textual analysis that is undertaken in this study. The first is the manner in which Orientalism reproduces itself from one era to the next, and the second is the integral nature of politics in any study. A common feature of appropriative discourses is not only the appropriation of the voice of the other in presuming to speak for them, but the assumption of superior knowledge of the other enabling the voicing of their reality: “[I]f the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation [by the Occident] does the job for the West, and *faute de mieux*, for the poor Orient” (Said 2003: 21).

This sentiment is echoed by Clare Bradford in her discussion of the work of Kate Langloh Parker in collecting and documenting Aboriginal stories, when she says “Parker’s project of speaking for Aborigines and interpreting them is inseparable from her claim to knowledge and power – knowledge of Aboriginal traditions and power over Aborigines, who rely on her to speak for them” (Bradford 2001: 109). Said emphasises the fact that it is knowledge of the other that gives the Westerner power to speak for the Oriental. But this is not just imagined knowledge but real knowledge founded on generations of the Occident studying the history, culture, geography of the Orient and writing extensively about it. In that knowledge then is the power to speak for, represent and interpret the other.

Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it ... (Said 2003: 3)

The power not only enables the construction of the other, but determines the very nature of that construction as well as the location of the other in the social hierarchy. The Orient however, has always been highly mythologised by the occident; “the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been, since antiquity, a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (Said 2003: 1). In addition to this romantic notion of the Orient is that it also had a long tradition of

colonial administrators, a formidable scholarly corpus, innumerable Oriental “experts” and “hands”, an Oriental professorate, a complex array of “Oriental” ideas (Oriental despotism, Oriental splendour, cruelty, sensuality), many Eastern sects, philosophies and wisdoms domesticated for local European use – the list can be extended more or less indefinitely (Said 2003: 4)

Although this attraction and resultant devotion to studying the orient would suggest something akin to a respect for the orient Said suggests that indeed the reverse is true. He points out that this interest is not an entirely healthy one and does not in any way quell the occidental compulsion to distort the image of the Oriental into something the occident can use as part of their process of oppression. Said contends that the image created of the Oriental is not merely distorted, but is indeed a total reconstruction of the other, presenting instead a picture of the other that is more consistent with imaginings of the constructor. But he does acknowledge that

in and among the negative there has been an indisputably high regard for things Oriental although that has failed to prevent a concomitant negative perception and domination.

However, despite the acclaim with which it has been received Said's Orientalism has also been heavily criticised. One of his most vocal critics is Bernard Lewis (1982) who starts by questioning the very definition of Orientalism used by Said. Lewis points out that the term Orientalist refers to a branch of scholarship dating back to the Renaissance period whose primary focus was philology within the area that is currently the Middle East. As the branches of Oriental scholarship grew to include philosophy, theology, literature and history it was felt that the term had become too imprecise and was officially abandoned at the 29th International Congress of Orientalists in 1973. Lewis (1982:un Para 51) questions Said's very scholarship and the accuracy of his research, arguing that Said's criticism of Orientalism is levelled not at the Orientalist corpus, but rather at the very study of the Orient by the other.

Beyond the question of bias there lies the larger epistemological problem of how far it is possible for scholars of one society to study and interpret the creations of another. The accusers complain of stereotypes and facile generalizations. Stereotyped prejudices certainly exist – not only of other cultures in the Orient or elsewhere, but of other nations, races, churches, classes, professions, generations, and almost any other group one cares to mention within our own society. The Orientalists are not immune to these dangers; nor are their accusers. The former at least have the advantage of concern for intellectual precision and discipline⁶.

Fred Halliday (1993: 158) concurs with Lewis' observations about the universality of prejudice when he points out that the prejudicial representations that Said is referring to are not unique to the Orient:

[T]he category of the 'Orient' is rather vague, since in *Orientalism* its usage implies that the Middle East is in some ways special, at least in the kind of imperialist or oppressive writing produced about it. Racist or oppressive writing is found about all subject peoples, whether they are Islamic or not, and there is nothing to choose between them. The claim of a special European animosity to Arabs – let alone Palestinians - or to Muslims does not bear historical comparison. Such ideas of

⁶ Said's own response to Lewis' criticism is equally scathing wherein he states that "Lewis's verbosity scarcely conceals both the ideological underpinnings of his position and his extraordinary capacity for getting everything wrong" (Said 1982: Para 1). Lewis and Said had an acrimonious and competitive relationship, which is illustrated by the exchanges between them over Said's Orientalism.

persecution rest on some implicit yardstick, a comparative massacrology in which the wrongs done to one people are greater.

Valid though both Lewis and Halliday's criticisms may be it is the argument of this thesis that Said is not suggesting that the inherent prejudice in the study of the Orient is unique to that part of the world. Neither is Orientalist scholarship in question in Said's book rather it is the value laden interpretive analysis of the other that is problematic in conjunction with the power dynamics that militate against an equitable engagement. It is the power dynamics in Orientalism that Halliday recognises as being a pivotal part of this discourse:

Within this approach, Orientalism is a discourse of domination, both a product of European subjugation of the Middle East and an instrument in the process. Its constituent ideas can be explained by this origin and instrumentality - one that denies the culture and history of the subjugated peoples, and which ignores the process of resistance they have generated in response to this domination, or imperialism. (Halliday 1993: 149)

Halliday's evaluation of Orientalism is more balanced than that of Lewis recognising both the shortcomings in the theory and scholarship, as well as the positive aspects thereof. He indeed challenges Said's other critics in their assertion that:

[A]n Orientalist body of literature is itself a polemical fiction, a straw man invented by Said and others. There are reasons – several indeed – for questioning Said's analysis, but I would argue that a reading of much of the literature on the history, society and politics of the region will give evidence that these ideas do occur and recur in the analysis and language (1993: 152).

Graham Huggan (2005: Para 6) suggests that much of the criticism levelled against *Orientalism* is the result of misreading or not reading Orientalism. He identifies three patterns of critical responses to *Orientalism*. The first are those critics who use Orientalism as a discursive regime for all forms of othering, what he terms 'de-Orientalization,' which is:

turning Orientalism into a codeword for virtually any kind of Othering process that involves the mapping of dominating practices of knowledge/power onto peoples seen, however temporarily or strategically, as culturally "marginal" economically "undeveloped" or psychologically "weak".

In suggesting that critical responses have resulted in Orientalism being used as a code word for any process of othering Huggan fails to recognise the fact that Orientalism is in fact not a code word for all othering discourses. What Orientalism has done is to offer a discursive regime that facilitates a means of reading and understanding the establishment of the power dynamics that exist within oppressive societies and the ways in which these inform how the other is interpreted. Huggan finds the translocation of the theory of Orientalism to other oppressive scenarios problematic. However, the ability to do that recognises the universality of the dynamics that inhere in oppressive societies. Orientalism then functions as a cartographic outline for other theories to be devised for other geographic locations.

The second pattern he terms 'anti-Orientalist Orientalism' which James Clifford encapsulated as being the tendency in Orientalism to "mimic the essentializing discourse that it attacks" (Clifford as cited in Huggan 2005: Para 7) thus appearing in the very guises it criticises. The third and possibly most substantive, and also most scathing, response to Orientalism is what Huggan calls the Orientalism of Orientalism. He points out that critics' hostile reception of the book are founded on, not least:

a series of apparently embarrassing paradoxes: that it reproduces the enumerative, patiently cumulative, and paternalistic methods of the "master" Orientalists; that it reinstates broad transhistorical and cultural generalization in the service of magisterial expertise; that its seemingly counterintuitive insistence on the internal consistency of Orientalism is inconsistent with Said's own Foucault-inspired discursive methods (but remains uncannily consistent with the self-authorizing manoeuvres of classical Orientalism itself); that it assembles a textualized Orient with a view to establishing intellectual authority over it, even if this "textual, contemplative Orient is never allowed, like its nineteenth-century historical counterpart, to facilitate the control of the geographical Orient as an "economic, administrative and even military space" (Para 7).

These observations are consistent with criticisms levelled at Said by Aijaz Ahmad who, according to Huggan, points to numerous shortcomings within Orientalism. In addition to questioning the academic rigour of Orientalism, Ahmad also finds Orientalism to be fraught with contradictions and "it duplicates the tactics of Orientalism (the method) by refusing to take on board numerous ways in which non-Western intellectuals have responded to, resisted, or refuted the dominant representations of the Orient in the West" (Huggan 2005: Para 15). Huggan also notes that other branches of academia have taken issue with Said's work such as

the feminists who reject the way in which he deals with sexuality and female agency. While historians such as David Cannadine completely ignore Said altogether, dismissing his work because of its fixation on the simplistic binaries that are dictated by race discourses, Huggan quotes him as saying “we [...] need to recognize that there were other ways of seeing the empire than the oversimplified categories of black and white with which we are preoccupied. It is time we reoriented Orientalism” (As cited in Huggan 2005: Para 19). Huggan concludes his assessment of Orientalism and its reception by stating that

Orientalism will continue to be at the center of lively debates on self-authorizing Western scholarship, the politics of crosscultural representation, the connection between cultural production and imperial power, and the privileges that accrue to “race” (Para 23).

Whatever the academic verdict on Orientalism might be, its contribution to opening up other discourses is without dispute. Orientalism introduced an alternate avenue for the analysis and understanding of the ways in which the other is conceived, constructed and portrayed as well as the power dynamics that inform such representations. This thesis rejects Huggan’s assertion that Orientalism is not transferable to other geographic locations that have a similar history of oppression.

Although Orientalism is specific to the Orient, Said’s tome has informed scholarship on the study of power and the representation of the other, informing Australian approaches to an understanding of the dynamics between the Aboriginal and settler populations of that country. Critics such as Clare Bradford 2001, Lorenzo Veracini 2003, Robert Hodge and Vijay Mishra 1992, Bain Attwood 1992, Kay Anderson and Colin Perrin 2008 and Mark Harris 1996 all acknowledge the great contribution Said’s Orientalism has made in the elucidation of their own understandings of the relationship between non-indigenous Australians and their Aboriginal counterparts. The discourse of Bantuism that is introduced in this thesis is informed by Orientalism with an awareness of the historical and geographical specificities which must be taken into cognisance with such an application.

2.2.2 Aboriginalism

The concept of Aboriginalism, which is informed by Orientalism, was first elaborated on by Hodge and Mishra (1992) and discussed at length by many scholars in various disciplines that touch on the Aborigines of Australia. Aboriginalism refers specifically to the relationship between the Aboriginal people of Australia and white Australians. Attwood (1992) points out that Aboriginalism has permeated every facet of Australian society:

Aboriginalism can ... be seen to have produced the reality it has imagined by influencing government policies and practices which have in turn, determined Aborigines' term of existence - racialising the Aboriginal social body and so making Aborigines of the indigenous population. Hence it would be a mistake to see Aboriginalism as merely epiphenomenal and therefore unimportant; rather it is a hegemonic system of theory and practice which has permeated colonial structures of power (Attwood 1992: ii-iii).

Harris (1996: 29) also notes that “[t]he construction of ‘Aboriginalism’ has occurred in every aspect of Australian life since the commencement of white invasion [and has been done] without reference to the voices of the Aboriginal people”. Much like Orientalism, Aboriginalism refers to the production of knowledge about Aboriginals by non-Aboriginals in Australia which has resulted in the interpretive construction of the Aborigines based solely on that produced knowledge. In his discussion of the role of the Aboriginalist in the construction of the history of Australia’s indigenous population Bain Attwood (1992) points out that Aboriginalism is premised on the power dynamics that exist between the Aboriginalists and the Aborigines and this power informs the constructed knowledge about the other. Attwood asserts that “power, knowledge and Aborigines are mutually constitutive – that they produce and maintain one another through discursive practices which can be known as Aboriginalism” (ii).

Bradford (2001) points out that the disequilibrium in the knowledge and power dynamics further lends itself to the appropriation of the voice of the other, thus the process of not only revealing the other, but vocalising the other vests with the Aboriginalist. This is an aspect of Aboriginalist discourse that is also noted by Harris (1996: 29) who argues that:

In every academic discipline the representations of Aboriginal people have occurred without any reference to the voices of the Aboriginal people. The construction of Aboriginal people as the 'Other' is done in their absence and confirms a relationship of power that is manifested in domination and subordination between, respectively, non-Aboriginals and Aboriginals.

The extent of this constructive power is further illuminated through a consideration of the avenues that are inaccessible to the Aboriginals, resulting in their silencing. Attwood (1992: vi) notes the significant contribution of anthropology to the acquisition of knowledge about the Aboriginals that in turn contributes to the construction of the Aboriginal and the appropriation of their voice.

From the late nineteenth century the production of knowledge about Aborigines became increasingly professionalised. Of central importance was anthropology⁷. ... It is now a truism that imperialism or colonialism provided anthropology with its subject matter –primitive societies- and its asymmetric relationships with power – between the observing subject and the observed object.

Harris also notes the fact that not only have Aboriginal voices been excluded from within the realm of academia, but that this has been made further possible by the laws that have been enacted with regard to Aboriginals⁸. The role of the state in the process of constructing and silencing the other is a fundamental aspect of appropriative discourses because it legitimises and legalises the oppression of the other and in the process their construction and silencing. The state's institutions of laws and sanctioning of prejudicial conduct not only reflect, but inform the socio-political racial agenda of a society especially in an oppressive society.

The appropriation of the voice of the other is an elemental feature of the construction of the other as it not only empowers the constructor to determine the nature of the representation, but

⁷ In this paper Attwood cites from N. Thomas' *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific* in which anthropology is described as "a discourse of alterity, a way of writing in which us/them distinctions are central, and which necessarily distances the people studied from ourselves" (Thomas as cited in Attwood 1992: vi).

⁸ In this article Harris looks at the ways in which the law is an enabling force in the construction of the other. The ways in which the law is structured denies the agency of the other and is devised in such a way as to vest all power and control with the coloniser. Harris looks at various pieces of legislation that apply to Aboriginal relics, cultural artefacts and land rights and uses them to illustrate the ways in which Aboriginals' agency is nullified by the law.

it also prevents the constructed from countering that representation or proffering an alternative portrayal. Bradford and Attwood both pay particular attention to the fact that in the process of appropriating the voice of the Aborigines the Aboriginalist also assumes the contradictory function of voicing the needs of the Aboriginals and the securing of not just those needs but also their culture and rights. Attwood (1992: ii) states that “Aboriginalism, furthermore, disempowers Aborigines because they are made into an object of knowledge over which European Australians, as the dispensers of truth about their needs and requirements, gain control”.

Because the voice of the Aboriginal is denied, the Aboriginalist also then assumes an advocacy role for the Aboriginal cause which creates an anomalous cyclical and unhealthy relationship between the two with the usurpation of Aboriginal agency by the Aboriginalist and the simultaneous negation of that agency (Bradford 2001). Aboriginalists feel themselves imbued with the power to negotiate Aboriginal history and culture thus entitling them to not only speak for them, but also save them from the loss of their very culture which teeters dangerously on the fringes of bastardisation and absorption by western influences that hover like vultures waiting for the opportune moment to devour the cultures of voiceless indigenous people which would surely perish were it not for the tireless efforts of the Aboriginalists.

This aberrant relationship is common in most instances of oppression where some members of the dominant group assume the role and responsibility of speaking on behalf of the subordinate group. Usually this function is undertaken under the noble guise of bringing public awareness to the plight of the other. However, elements of paternalism and patronising are a common feature of this assumed function, resulting in the continued subordination of the other under a differing guise less readily recognised and therefore more dangerous. The most obvious dilemma that arises from such a situation is the further refutation of the voice of the other, undermining their power to represent themselves and their interests, resulting in an increased dependence on the other to be their voice. The manifestation of this deviant interaction is precisely what led Steve Biko⁹ to advocate for a Black Consciousness movement

⁹ See the essay/editorial entitled “Black Souls in White Skins” in *I Write What I Like* (1996)

that was open only to black members so that the responsibility of fighting against apartheid vested solely with black people in order to guard against the development of such a situation. Biko was wary of a scenario in which the black population felt itself incapable of self-representation and the articulation of their own interests, thus leading to an increased dependence on those whites whose political opinions were aligned with those of the black populace.

Anderson and Perrin (2008: 149), however, argue that by “subordinat[ing] the specificity of ‘Aboriginalist’ discourse to its colonial instrumentality” Attwood and other theorists fail to recognise the fluidity of the constructed other and the inability of colonialist social constructivism to fix the identity, and therefore the agency, of the other. Anderson and Perrin (2008: 150) base their argument on Bhabha’s assertion that discourses such as Orientalism tend to fail to recognise “the inherent deconstructibility of discourse” which is the cause of the excessiveness of racial stereotyping and it is this excess that prevents the colonialist discourse from being able to fix the other.

What is suggested by Anderson and Perrin with the aid of Bhabha is that the constructed ‘other’ is able to maintain their agency because colonial discourse is not able to fix the other in that one aspect of construction. Because discourse is not able to concretise the construction of the other it “remains exposed, rather than closed, to an excess – or to an Otherness – that it is unable to either name or contain” (150). They suggest that the limit to the power of the discourse and its ability to construct the other is evidenced by the fact that there is a continual need to reconstruct the other. However, Attwood (1992: xi) argues that, to the contrary, the discourse of Aboriginalism has been so totalising in its construction of the other that “Aborigines ‘writing back’ against Aboriginalism tend to be caught within its paradigms”.

Perhaps what Anderson and Perrin overlook is the fact that the repetition of the construction of the other reflects the very functional constructionist nature of colonial discourse which necessarily needs to (re)construct the other as the discourse itself changes in accordance with its needs. That construction of the other must therefore be reshaped in accordance with its necessity and function within the discourse. The suggestion being proffered is that the failure

to completely eclipse the agency of the other to the extent that the very utilisation of this power is no longer discernible or necessary therefore nullifies that power. However, this suggestion fails to take into cognisance the limits of power, and the resilience of the other notwithstanding, the exercise of power, regardless of its extent or limitedness is still elemental to the construction of the other and the denial of agency.

Veracini (2003), concurring with the sentiments of Anderson and Perrin, also argues that colonial discourses did not eradicate the agency of the Aboriginal Australians, and suggests indeed that the Aboriginals were able to resist assimilation and merely redefined themselves in order to exist within the prevailing dispensation. Citing Brock, Veracini (2003) argues that many historical accounts of Aboriginal societies fail to acknowledge:

the extent to which Aboriginal 'agency' had successfully prevented assimilationist policies from succeeding. Institutional and protectionist practices had not broken a powerful mix of passive resistance and concealed resistance. Of course Aboriginal people 'had to redefine themselves if they were to survive' but 'this understanding was not imposed on them; they chose it over other options. Those who chose not to redefine themselves may well have been those who did not ultimately survive'. (Veracini citing Brock 2003: 227)

In furtherance of his point with regard to Aboriginal agency Veracini cites the work of Dawn May who suggests that Aboriginal agency and way of life was not supplanted by European equivalents of the same:

Aboriginal people were not abandoning their own mode of production. They were in fact trying to accommodate the European system into their own. They quickly realized that in exchange for labour on the cattle stations, they could legitimately live on their own land and practice any aspects of their old life in a modified form. (May as cited in Veracini 2003: 228)

Veracini (228) goes on to add that:

Aboriginal labour was available in a context of dire labour shortages, offering skills – both new and traditional – appropriate for the 'open range' system of pastoralism, and was most importantly cheap. At the same time, the provision of goods and rations and a continued residence on customary land meant that a traditional lifestyle and customary obligations to land could be retained.

However a choice between annihilation and servitude is a rather like a Hobson's choice; Veracini, Brock and May fail to take into account the fact that the compromises made by the Aboriginals were not voluntary but forced on them by circumstances which left them powerless and dispossessed. The fact that they, and not the colonisers, were making these compromises is indicative of the unequal power dynamics. Their agency was denied by the simple fact of not being able to determine their own existence and having their way of life only partially accessible to them through the provision of cheap labour. Additionally the reduction of their role and function, on their own ancestral lands, to labour residing there only at the munificence of the new land owners speaks to the nullification of their agency and their functional (re)construction by the other. That Aboriginals, like many other subjugated peoples, were able to adapt to the changed circumstances does not invalidate the effacing of their agency in the process of this subjugation and adaptation.

2.2.3 Bantuism

In this chapter I am introducing the term Bantuism to refer to the relationship between blacks and whites in South Africa, where the agency of the black is denied by the white in choosing to speak for them as well as to write about them. This discursive regime vests the white voice with superior knowledge about, and power over, the voiceless black for, and about whom, they presume to speak. The approach in this study is to look at the ways in which literary representations of blackness have changed over time through a political filter. The discourse of Bantuism is assessed by way of political and literary juxtaposition. Like Orientalism, Bantuism is rooted in issues of power and dominance, history and economics, with obvious political manifestations through policies and legislation.

The term Bantuism is derived from the word Bantu which means people, and according to Rodney Needham and Ngwabi Bhebe (1984) there are over 400 languages in sub-equatorial Africa that have a similar word for people, but the number could be as high as 650. Bantu has two common uses, the first is its use in speech to refer, as already mentioned, to people. The second is its usage in historiography to refer to a family of languages that are traced back to

the “proto Bantu” speech (John Lanphear and Toyin Falola 1995¹⁰). Various groups of the Bantu are believed to have migrated from West Africa, specifically present day Nigeria and Cameroon, towards the east of the continent and finally south from as early as the second millennium BC (Elizabeth Isichei 1997¹¹).

Bantu was first used to define this linguistic family by the German linguist Wilhelm Bleek in 1862 in his book entitled *A Comparative Grammar of South African Languages*. He found that languages in Southern, Eastern and Western Africa shared so many characteristics that he concluded that they must be part of a single language group (Saul Dubow 1995). Dubow (93) notes that the “confusion over the use of the terms ‘Bantu’ and ‘Negro’ initially arose because the former was used both in a linguistic and a racial sense”. Part of the difficulty in attaching race to the term Bantu also stemmed from the fact that linguists did not regard the Bantu as racially pure and wasted little time in trying to pinpoint their racial origins (Dubow 1995: 75). However, the pursuit of clearly demarcated racial categories and the introduction of the system of apartheid gradually led to the term becoming increasingly racialised moving it ever further from its linguistic definitional origins.

Chapter 3 of Dubow’s book gives a detailed discussion around the origins of the term Bantu and the academic debates that surrounded its application and to whom it was ascribed, whether a linguistic or racial group:

The debate over Mapungubwe¹² highlighted a crucial ambiguity in the use of the word ‘Bantu’, namely, whether the term denoted physical or cultural (linguistic) characteristics. In order to minimize confusion, efforts were made in the mid-1930s to

¹⁰ This essay looks closely at the various stages of Bantu migration and the varied social units that they either encountered or established in the places they settled.

¹¹ Isichei gives an engaging overview of Bantu migration and their impact and influence on the various cultures they encountered. She also gives details with regard to gender roles and cultural practices as well as some suggested reasons for their migration.

¹² Mapungubwe is the location of one of the earliest Zimbabwean civilizations discovered to date. Located in the Shashe-Limpopo valley between present day Zimbabwe, South Africa and Botswana, this ancient civilisation is thought to have existed between AD 1000-1300. Archaeologists consider it one of the earliest examples of complex economic, social and political societies in Southern Africa for more on Mapungubwe see: Thomas N. Huffman 2005; Sian Tiley 2004.

introduce a new convention: physical anthropologists would use the term ‘South African Negro’, whereas cultural anthropologists would retain the term ‘Bantu’ (Dubow 1995: 105).

In South Africa this term is imbued with a complex history and laden with a pejorative understanding that is far removed from the actual meaning of the term. Translated into English, Bantu means “people”. There is nothing else one can derive from the term Bantu when used in a sentence other than the fact that there is more than one person being referred to, neither age, gender nor indeed race can be deduced from this word. However, in addition to referring to people the word ubuntu has a philosophical definition that refers to humanness. Lucius T. Outlaw (1996: 211) quotes Mongasuthu G. Buthelezi’s elaboration on the term ubuntu:

Long before Europeans settled in South Africa little more than three centuries ago, indigenous African peoples had well-developed philosophical views about the worth of human beings and about desirable community relationships. A spirit of humanism – called *ubuntu* (humanness) in the Zulu language and *botho* in the Sotho language – shaped the thoughts and daily lives of our peoples. Humanism and communal traditions together encouraged harmonious social relations.

The Black Administration Act¹³ (1927) was the first piece of legislation to give a legal definition to the term Bantu, Section 35 of the act states that:

Bantu” shall include any person who is a member of any Aboriginal race or tribe of Africa: Provided that any person residing under the same conditions as a Bantu in a scheduled Bantu area or a released area, as defined or described in or under the Bantu Trust and Land Act. (S. M. Seymour 1960: 8-9).

Seymour points out that this definition even applied to Europeans who lived in the areas designated as native areas and in the same conditions as natives. He goes on to add that “[i]n no circumstances can a person of pure African blood be regarded as a non-Native, even if he has adopted entirely the European way and standards of living, or has been exempt from the operation of Native law” (Seymour 1960: 9). This definition of Bantu marks one of the first

¹³ This act was previously entitled the Native Administration Act. In 1976 The Bantu Administration Amendment Act (1976) was introduced which was very similar to the Native Administration Amendment (South Africa History Online: nd.)

instances of racialising what is essentially a neutral term¹⁴ because this definition not only racialised an anodyne word, but it instituted into law a definitional anomaly which largely remains to this day. The linguistic use of the term to refer to a black language group cannot be overlooked as enabling the process of racialising the term resulting in its subsequent usage in the racist policies of the apartheid regime.

Its more common usage to refer specifically to black people was popularised in the 1920s by black intellectuals, white liberals and missionaries in preference to the more commonly used and pejorative kaffir and native (John T. Baker 1965; Benjamin Pogrund: 1997; Padraig O'Malley n.d.). However, by the time the National Party took over office and began using Bantu in its repressive apartheid legislation¹⁵ it also came to be regarded as a term of derision and began to encounter the same rejection that previous terms such as native and kaffir encountered¹⁶. By the 1970s with the advent of Black Consciousness the preferred terms of reference for the indigenous population was African or black (Pogrund: 1997). Dubow (1995: 105) notes that:

The Nationalist Government's insistence on using the word 'Bantu'- as opposed to 'African' or 'black' – was greatly resented. It constituted an essential element of the abusive racist vocabulary of apartheid, much as 'native' had been in the segregationist era.

The use of Bantu in apartheid legislation served to concretise not just its usage, but perception also, among the white populace as a racially defining term.

¹⁴ Wills (1985) points out that it is not possible to talk of Bantu physical characteristics because although they are of negroid origin the many centuries of intermarriage make it impossible to speak of them as possessing singular or even similar physical characteristics.

¹⁵ Within apartheid legislation there are several laws with the word Bantu in their title thus demarcating them as specifically designed for the black population alone. It is these kinds of associations and the nature of the laws in question that continue to make the word Bantu deplorable to most black people. See also African History n.d. O'Malley points out that it was not until the 1950s that the term Bantu came into official usage, this assertion is borne out by the number of laws that were instituted by the South African authorities from the 1950s that bore the term Bantu such as; The Bantu Building Workers Act (1951); The Bantu Authorities Act (1951); The Bantu Education Act (1953); The Bantu Investment Corporation Act (1959); The Promotion of Bantu Self Government Act (1959); The Urban Bantu Councils Act (1961); The Bantu Homelands Citizens Act (1970).

¹⁶ This negative association with the term is still prevalent today especially because the singular for Bantu, which is muntu is still used as a derogatory term pronounced munt.

I have chosen to use the term Bantu in articulating this discourse for a number of reasons: firstly because the nature of its usage, its racialisation and pejorative nature is quite specific to South Africa. I feel it is vital for the discussion not to get lost in the generalities of black discourses and I believe the uniqueness of the South African situation calls for a term that reflects South Africa's socio-political history. Secondly Bantuism encapsulates the very nature of the historically othering, labelling, deprecating and dominating nature of the engagement of white South Africans with their black counterparts. Thirdly Bantu, when used outside of its African language context is such a politically loaded term that none of its neutrality remains, and it is the contention of this thesis that its negative association will only begin to wane when it is used as part of a critical discourse that uses it differently to the ways it has been used in recent history¹⁷. The final reason, is because the theory draws so heavily on both Orientalism and Aboriginalism, but especially Orientalism, that I feel it is important to find a term that simultaneously pays homage to its influences but distinguishes itself from them also, locating itself linguistically, historically and geographically in Southern Africa and more specifically in South Africa.

The geographical specificity of Orientalism, Aboriginalism and Bantuism narrows their focus, emphasising the significance of their individual histories and the socio-political realities within which they are constructed. While they share common elements of the oppressive discourses upon which they were found there are aspects of their manifestation that are specific to each of them by virtue of their location. It is the geopolitically specific aspects of these discursive constructs that enable a nuanced and distinguishable analysis of concepts that have universal application but geographically individual implementation, manifestation and corollary. Acknowledging the geopolitical relevance of discourse Said (2003: 12) points out that the process of constructing the other is also informed by a:

¹⁷ The word uBuntu which has gained currency and mileage in recent South Africa political discourse is a derivative of Buntu. Ubuntu was popularized by ex South African President Thabo Mbeki's continual use of it during his term in office with particular regard to his call for an African Renaissance, as a result countless volumes have been written on the subject of Ubuntu and its significance as an African philosophy. www.Dictionary.com defines uBuntu as humanity or fellow feeling; kindness.

distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philosophical texts; it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction ... but also of a whole series of interests which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains ... it is above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political ... power intellectual ... power cultural ... [and] power moral (emphasis in original).

One of the facets of white engagement with blacks that reflects this geographically specific manifestation of oppression is the fact that the perception of blacks was markedly different to that of Orientals in that no aspect of blackness was ever held in high regard. Neither the history, culture, art nor intellectual contribution of Africans was considered to be of any value beyond an anthropological curiosity. Unlike the Orient, Africa was seen as having nothing of any historical, intellectual or cultural value or interest to offer. Any widespread appreciation of things African in any of these fields is fairly recent and was enabled by the demise of colonialism which ushered in the development of a strong arts and culture movement and the recognition of African scholarship.

Samuel Yeboah (1988) argues that the reasons for Western interest in, and the subsequent scramble for Africa were threefold; firstly Africa's rich natural resources, secondly the cheap labour that was not always necessarily paid and thirdly the provision of a new location for Europe's surplus, mainly poor, segments of their populations. Many Westerners saw Africa as backward, without history, culture, knowledge or civilisation. So inferior was Africa in their estimations that Egypt, because of its rich history and ancient civilisation, was considered not to be a part of Africa. However, this notion was not restricted to just Egypt but was extended to include any nation with evidence of sophisticated and complex civilisations such that the ruins at Great Zimbabwe and other ancient finds in Africa were "ideologically speaking, indices not of indigenous African culture but of lost 'white' or 'European' or 'Semitic' civilisations in Africa" (Peter Merrington 2004: 67¹⁸).

¹⁸ Peter Merrington's *Staggered Orientalism* looks at the Orientalising of the Cape in particular and South Africa in general through architecture, the history of tourism and the writings of the Edwardian era all centered around Rhodes' dream of a railroad running from Cape to Cairo.

The discourse of Bantuism delineates the constructed perceptual history of black/white contact and engagement, specifically white construction and valuation of blackness and attendant dominance. The differing manifestations of Bantuism throughout the history of this association are not only reflective of the socio-politically deterministic perception of the other, but are also indicative of the utility value of the other to the dominant group and changes within the power dynamics. From the first moment of white settler engagement with the indigenous and black population of South Africa the process of constructing the other was embarked upon. The perception of the Hottentots and Bushmen as inferior that was created on initial contact with them in the early eighteenth century was then extended to encapsulate the Bantu on subsequent encounters (Alfred John Willis: 1985). The construction of the other is not a single action that, once achieved, is left to its own devices. Rather, I would argue, it is an on-going process which must modify and reconfigure itself in accordance with the times and the needs of the dominant party for whom factors of history, politics or economics, within and outside their control, render it necessary for the other to exist.

Said (2003: 7) points out that one of the most enabling aspects of European construction of the other was the “period of extraordinary European ascendancy from the late Renaissance to the present” and this ascendancy conferred on the European power and dominance over the other. The conception and depiction of the other follows a trajectory that is mapped out largely by the socio-political and economic needs of the dominator as well as their power. The naming and perception of the other has consistently changed throughout the history of this contact, reflecting the shifting power dynamics and struggles. The definitional perceptions have changed from the savage of first contact, to the Kaffir of the late nineteenth century, to the native of the early twentieth century, to the Bantu of the apartheid laws, to the African of the 1970s Black Consciousness movement to the post 1994 newly liberated and equal black South African.

Views of Africa and its people have ranged from the contemptuous to the acerbic. Hegel’s dismissive indifference to Africa as a historical entity, included merely as courtesy, typifies the general attitude and notion of Africa at the time.

Africa is no historical part of the World ... it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it – that is in its northern part – belong to the Asiatic or European World. ... What we properly mean by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Underdeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History. (Hegel as cited in Peter Merrington 2004: 65).

The perception of the South African “native” as expressed by Mr. J. X. Merrington (Victoria West Member of South African Parliament) is a further demonstration of the disdainful regard in which Africans were held¹⁹. For although J. X. Merrington was against the proposed bill and felt it was unjust and failed to take into account the contributions of the African population in building the country (with their labour) and boosting the country's economy (with their purchasing power) he still regarded them as barbarous. His fear was that the proposed bill would establish:

a sort of kraal into which all the natives were to be driven, and ... left to develop on their own lines. To allow them to go on their own lines was merely to drive them back into barbarism; their own lines meant barbarous lines; their own lines were cruel lines (Solomon T. Plaatje 1916: 36).

These portrayals of the indigenous population served to augment the constructed image of them while providing justification for the conduct of the other in relation to the indigenous population. In his discussion on the functional representation of the natives Dubow (1995: 74) notes that:

[c]onstantly repeated images of Bantu ‘hordes’ and invaders’ reinforce the impression of their transience and barbarity. During the apartheid era these notions served as a basic element in the justificatory ideology of Christian-national thought. They recur constantly in school textbooks and may also be seen in the government-sponsored Tomlinson Commission of the mid-1950s which sought to outline a blueprint for apartheid.

The above views of the black population reflected the commonly held perception of them among the white South African population. *The Rand Daily Mail* stated that what Africans

¹⁹ J. X. Merrington is quoted by Plaatje (1916) during the parliamentary debate about the proposed Native's Land Act (1913). The Act decreed that blacks could not own or rent land outside of the designated reserves which were intended for black occupation. These areas were agriculturally poor and dry and comprised less than 30% of the total land mass of the country which was exclusively white. The quote is from the parliamentary debates around the bill as reported in the Union Hansard before the bill was passed into law.

needed was “to be taught the virtues of manual labour and slow development instead of being given a smattering of European education and classed as a civilised people when all the time it is but a veneer” (As cited in Dubow 1995: 90). These perceptions of the African as a lesser form of humanity were not the reserve of the politicians, but were also the express view of the clergy. At a 1923 interracial and interdenominational conference a Free State Missionary J. G. Strydom stated that “all natives were not as calm and as intelligent as those present. If they were, he would say, ‘Give them a chance.’ But the I.C.U. and Ethiopian movement had a great majority, and he felt the few intelligent natives would never keep them down” (As cited in Dubow 1992: 213).

At the extreme end of the spectrum are the vitriolic views exemplified by those expressed by Barnett Potter (1970: 20):

Two thousand years of civilisation has not always made us intelligent, well behaved or attractive persons. But the most limited and base among us is a world apart from the primitive African squatting naked on his haunches in the desolate world of bush, forest or malaria-infested swamp.

It is acknowledged that these extreme opinions were not shared by all white people but the perception of Africans as inferior is still a feature of our society though more subtly expressed. In his book entitled *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* Jan Nederveen Pieterse (1992) does point out that although images of blacks in Western culture have largely been negative, this was not always the case. He gives an historical overview of the depictions of blackness within Western iconography dating back to 2500 BC. The iconography clearly illustrates how the depiction of blackness has, throughout the history of black/white engagement vacillated between positive and negative. But what is most illuminating about Pieterse’s book is the fact that he also looks at why these changes take place, placing great emphasis on the fact that the political, economic and religious preoccupations of the day were crucial determinants in these depictions.

Ben Magubane (2001) gives an excellent illustration of this in his discussion of the mining industry in South Africa. According to him with the discovery of gold and diamonds there was a sudden change in the white rhetoric with regard to the black populace, the parlance of

exterminating the natives was quickly replaced by talk of the civilizing nature of work. The prospects of cheap labour and the untold wealth it could garner for the colonizers was the primary motivator behind this shift in the stance towards the indigenous population. The discovery of mineral wealth combined with the unwillingness of the white population to be party to its extraction involving as it did gruelling labour made black labour a necessary feature of the South African landscape. It therefore became necessary not to advance any theories that could in any way jeopardize access to the cheap and abundant labour promised by the large numbers of black people.

Ben Magubane (2007) asserts that the construction of race is primarily a functional process, but more importantly a deliberate one. The European bourgeoisie presented itself and its civilisation as the best and therefore superior to all other civilizations and people. In order to accomplish this it was not only necessary to construct an inferior other, but also to provide the proof of their superiority with academic evidence. This confirmation was then used to repudiate the humanity of the other in order to maintain the coloniser as the superior being and therefore the natural ruler. Having ensured that the oppressed are kept in a state of subjugation and ignorance, the colonialists maintained that the other was incapable of elevating themselves from degradation to civilization hence their current state of oppression.

The distinction between the various indigenous groups is largely superficial and did not translate into any meaningful changes in perception and is a recurring feature of Bantuism in both colonial and post-colonial discourses²⁰. The difference between colonial and post-colonial Bantuism is that in the former the whites considered themselves to be naturally and divinely ordained as the superior race. In the latter there is a general acceptance of the equality of the races but blacks are still considered insufficiently mature to manage their own affairs. The navigation of black reality and its representation remains beyond the control of the black

²⁰ J. X. Merrington, during the parliamentary debate of the Native Land Bill, argues against the treatment of the educated, civilised native in the same way as other natives. Even though he is advocating equality he distinguishes between what he sees as the civilized and uncivilized native. His argument is less about justice and more about how this civilized native, if treated better could be co-opted on the side of the European (Plaatje 1916).

people themselves thus reaffirming the unequal relationship that exists between black and white which invariably seems to play itself out in a dichotomous arena.

2.3 Representation and its Meaning

This unequal power relationship is extendable from the political arena to the field of literature where white South African writers have attempted to not only describe, but negotiate, the meaning of blackness within the South African context both before and after apartheid. Not confining themselves to mere description there have been continual efforts to elucidate black reality in much of South Africa's writings for the youth²¹. Examples of books that attempt to give literary representations of black reality include *Gogo's Magic* by Morag Vlaming (2003); *Someone Called Lindiwe* by Gail Smith (2003); *Thoko* by Brenda Munitich (1993); *Zolani Goes to Yeoville* by Georgiana King (1995); *Cry Softly Thule Nene* by Shirley Bojé (1992); *Sharp Sharp Zulu Dog* by Anton Ferreira (2003); *Crocodile Burning* by Michael Williams (1994); *The Slayer of Shadows* by Elana Bregin (1996); *Spirit of the Mountain* by Shelly Davidow (1996); *Waiting for the Rain* by Sheila Gordon (1989); *Forever Young Forever Free* by Hettie Jones (1976); *Into the Valley* by Michael Williams (1990); *A Cageful of Butterflies* by Lesley Beake (1989); *The Day of the Kugel* by Barbara Ludman (1989). This is by no means an exhaustive list and covers only a small number of the novels written in the period covered by this thesis.

Most of these novels are intended to give an empathetic portrayal of the black experience of oppression, poverty and continued economic disenfranchisement, with the intended aim of informing the white readership of black reality in South Africa. In his discussion on the production of knowledge about Aborigines by non-Aborigines, Attwood (1992: xii) notes that given the inequitable power relationship that exists in these appropriative discourses one

²¹ It should be noted that just because the majority of youths in South Africa are black it does not necessarily follow that they are the majority readers of English language youth novels, nor that they are the primary target market. This merits mention only in so far as it reflects the exclusionary nature of a significant proportion of youth literature which is still written for a minority white youth audience. The issue of the youth's voice and its appropriation does not fall within the scope of this study; however a mention of it serves to illustrate the appropriative approach that has become the norm when dealing with marginal groups.

must ask, when encountering knowledge produced by the other, who is producing this knowledge, for whom and why. Attwood (1992: xii) goes on to ask:

Is it possible to have any worthwhile non-Aboriginal knowledge about Aborigines, or is it inherently flawed, either because of the political – that is colonial – circumstances in which it was created, or because of epistemological considerations associated with representation; all production of knowledge about the other involves an act of translation which distorts the lived experience and worldview of that other, and, at worse, such accounts barely refer to the object of inquiry.

Attwood's questions and observations regarding the production of knowledge about the other, although specific to the Australian experience, are equally applicable within the South African context and address the key question of representation that this thesis addresses. Similarly, Brian Wallis (2003: 163) points out that the politicisation of race centres on the issue of power and knowledge production. Like Attwood, he places emphasis on who influences the determination of what constitutes knowledge and who in turn produces this knowledge, as well as who represents the other and how they are represented.

Judith Bentley and Peter Midgely (2000) affirm that the political changes that have taken place in the country have been continually reflected in the literature, especially youth literature. They emphasise the fact that the changes that occurred between 1990 and 2000 led to the production of youth novels that are contributing to the national dialogue. They assert that the dysfunctional and fragmented families that are portrayed in some youth novels are a reflection of the dislocation of the nation and youth novels use the politics of interpersonal relationships to mirror the national socio-political realities. Inggs (2002) suggests that because the institutionalised racial barriers no longer exist and the various racial groups are now interacting with each other the racial tensions within those interpersonal relationships reflect the racial tensions within society itself. If we accept these assertions that youth novels are an attempt at articulating youth issues within the socio-political arena it is therefore important to also bear in mind who the writers are when we examine these novels.

Whilst acknowledging that most of the writers are white using black protagonists to deal with issues that a large percentage of white youths were not previously interested in, Bentley and Midgely fail to problematise this appropriation. They refer to this as crossing over, whereby a

white writer uses a range of characters of differing races and cultures within their text, thus crossing over the racial and cultural barriers. “As awareness rose in the 1980’s of voices not heard in the literature, many of the white authors began to include a wider variety of characters, as writers they crossed racial and cultural boundaries and tried to take readers with them using Black protagonists” (Bentley and Midgely 2000: 7).

This statement shows a clear recognition of the fact that black youths have historically not had a voice. But there is similarly an acceptance of not only the licence, but the propriety and ability of white writers to speak on behalf of a people whose experiences are greatly divergent from their own. This is especially true of novels produced during the politically turbulent period of the 1980s where the government introduced various states of emergency to quell the civil unrest in the black communities. Bentley and Midgely do not problematise the usurping of the black voice in these writings, and imply that the fact that these novels were targeting largely white audiences nullifies the impropriety of their appropriative nature. The means are justified by the fact that these novels were bringing matters of race and politics into the consciousness of the white youth, issues of which they were previously ignorant of or simply uninterested in.

Bentley and Midgely (2000: 10) go on to suggest that the appropriation of the black voice by white writers is further justified by the failure of black writers to write stories for and about being black:

In recent years, some publishers have made strong efforts to find, encourage and publish young adult books by writers of color. Some of the results have been formulaic and overly sensational but should improve as writers gain hold in a language, English, which is often their third or fourth acquired. In the meantime, White writers have at least, given White children a sympathetic insight into Black lives (Jenkins as cited in Bentley and Midgely 2000: 10). Understandings of reasons for economic differences and even for abusive behaviour (unemployment and powerlessness) have been attempted.

There are certain aspects of this statement that merit particular attention before I return to the substance of the quote itself. Firstly there is the stated claim that black writers are deficient in English and are therefore not able to produce quality work for the youth market. Whilst it is

indeed true that for many blacks English is not their first language there are more than adequate examples of black writers who not only write in English but do so well despite Bentley and Midgely's claims. What they fail to appreciate is the fact that most black writers have historically written for the adult market as part of the anti-apartheid strategy. It is not a linguistic deficiency but a legacy of apartheid that is slow to change. The second contentious issue is the suggestion, in this quote, that these books have enabled white children to understand abusive behaviour thus racialising abuse making it a black issue that white children have neither experience nor understanding of because it does not exist in their white world.

The arguments outlined by Bentley and Midgely are typical of Bantuist assumptions, where the benevolent Bantuist steps into the void left by the inefficient native and provides them with a voice that they would otherwise not have had. Whether or not the representation is accurate or consistent with the other's self-perception or preferred representation is immaterial, what matters is that the Bantuist is filling the perceived void. Bringing the realities and sufferings of the black population to the attention of white youths is a laudable and necessary undertaking is what Bentley and Midgely are suggesting. There is, however, the ever present danger, that is exemplified in South African youth novels, of only presenting black people as poor, disempowered victims²².

Inggs (2002) and Tötemeyer (1988a) point out that youth novels have been a significant vehicle of social change, encouraging young readers to question the socio-political and moral norms of their society rather than simply accepting them and moulding themselves in accordance with the dictates of their society. Yet despite this function the question of who holds the power, and controls the power paradigm shift brought about by changes in the political arena is vital to an understanding of South African youth literature in post-apartheid society. According to Inggs the fact that these stories are written by people who have no real understanding of what it meant to be black under apartheid is problematic in and of itself, but

²² While this remains largely true it should be noted that this is changing and the more recently published books have gone to some effort to portray an array of black characters, but as will be shown in subsequent chapters these characters are themselves largely stereotypical.

it is aggravated by the fact that these stories are written in English which is currently not the language of the majority. Indeed the very use of English is possibly inappropriate²³.

Renowned South African children's story writer Niki Daly (2002), famous for his stories that feature black characters, warns against the many pitfalls for white writers writing black characters. He is especially conscious of the fact that the black experience in South Africa is beyond the understanding of the white populace and attempts by white writers to use black characters to enhance an awareness of blackness can be inappropriate. This is especially true for white writers who appear unfamiliar with what he calls the various codes of writing blackness. What is interesting about Daly's assertions is the fact that the majority of his stories feature black characters almost exclusively. Daly no doubt considers himself well versed in the requisite codes of writing blackness and because his work is not advancing the black 'cause' he does not recognise in his own work the same appropriative discourses that exists in the writings of other white writers who use black characters.

What Daly calls codes is of course nothing more than an understanding of what it means to be black. There are no codes, merely experiences to which white people are not privy thus rendering them incapable of capturing them adequately in their books. Daly (2002: 40) quotes Geina Mhlope as saying that white people are "excavating Black lives as a resource" and perhaps in this statement lies the fundamental problem with a majority of the youth novels being produced in South Africa. Implied in Mhlope's statement is the suggestion of the commodification of black lives for material gain which may go some way toward a clearer understanding of the failure of white South Africans to portray black characters that are not stereotypes.

In a similar vein Jenkins (1993) suggests that in addition to a lack of understanding of what it means to be black, another problem with white writers writing on blackness is the fact that

²³ This facet of the language in which the stories are written introduces a third tier of separation between the writer and the subject, the first being racial, the second age and the third language, thus making concrete the assertion that white writers are not best placed for such an undertaking. However like age, the issue of language is beyond the scope of this thesis and merits mention only in so far as it serves to advance the argument that white writers in a multi lingual country like South Africa writing in English, a minority language, are not best placed to speak on blackness especially in a language not used by the majority of the black population.

they do not use the black characters as the vehicle through which an understanding of the black situation is brought about. Instead they use white characters, with whom the white reader can identify, and through this character's own understanding of the black character, the reader is thus illuminated. So rather than developing black characters of sufficient depth to be able to reveal their own history, culture and experience of oppression the black character serves only to bring the white character to a sufficient level of insight to be able to impart their own understanding of blackness to the white reader.

Toni Morrison (1993) also looks at how and why black characters are included in the works of white writers. She maintains that since most novels by white writers with black characters are not written for black people it begs the question why then include them especially if their inclusion is largely negative, or superfluous. In answer to her own question she states that the inclusion of the black character is "reflexive; an extraordinary meditation on the self; a powerful exploration of the fears and desires that reside in the writerly conscious" (1993: 17). The black other is merely a vehicle for the perpetuation of a similarly constructed white persona that exudes qualities of such astonishing pre-eminence as to eclipse their black counterpart rendering them worthy only of white servitude. Morrison's point is accurate with regard to many novels written for the youth in South Africa. The majority of the black characters are stereotypes that serve only to advance the story of the white character as will be illustrated in Chapters 5 and 6.

Children's understanding and appreciation of, not only their own culture, but others as well, is enhanced by being exposed to different cultures and experiences through literature (Thuli Radebe: 1995). However because most books for the youth in South Africa are written by white writers the representation of black people, their culture and history is determined by the other. So whatever cultural understanding is derived from reading books about black people, if inaccurately depicted, as has generally been the case, leaves the reader with an entirely erroneous understanding of the other. It is not being suggested that all depictions of a foreign culture by a writer not of that group will invariably be unfavourable, but once the representation of the other is determined by the dominant group its accuracy is immediately questionable. The Bantuist will either use his or her representation to justify the oppression of

the other or to enhance their own eminence as an authority on the other and so too as the voice of the other in fighting against that oppression.

Yulisa A. Maddy and Donnarae MacCann (1996: 121) agree that many western writers for children promote a damaged image of Africa and its people:

Images produced by Western writers for children are not currently representational. Symbols generally denigrate the African personality and lend support to the Anglo Saxon dreams of superiority. Character types do not acknowledge black consciousness or the centuries-long efforts of blacks²⁴.

They go on to add that this negative imagining is very similar to that portrayed in the popular media which continues to depict Africa as an uncivilised place and Africans as incapable of managing their own affairs. These depictions of Africa plant, in the subconscious of children, a negative perception of Africa that they then carry throughout their childhood. Whilst it is not necessarily applicable to every white writer, some white writers continue to perpetuate negative stereotypes of black people because their impressions are informed by their own previous exposure to negative representations of blackness. These continued images of blackness and the black experience of oppression inform the next generation of white children, but even more dangerously inform the next generation of black children whose self-image is adversely affected by them.

In his book entitled *Catching Them Young 1: Sex, Race and Class in Children's Fiction* Dixon (1977) looks extensively at the ways in which blackness is represented in books for young children. He argues that the racism that is found in books has a deep-seated psychological impact on black children, many of whom end up rejecting themselves because of the social rejection of blackness reinforced in books. This negative representation of blackness does not end with literature, but is reinforced in other media thus concretising portrayals of blacks as inferior. Dixon's assertions on the psychological impact of race representation on black

²⁴ The changing political landscape in South Africa over the last few decades has also introduced significant changes in the literature written for the youth. Subsequent chapters in this thesis will look at this in detail.

children are confirmed by various studies that have been undertaken with black children to determine the impact of racism on their self-image.

Such studies include Dr. Kenneth Clark's "Doll Test" which was done in the 1950s (Fusco 2003: 30), Mary Ellen Goodman's 1960s study on the extent to which children are racially aware (Goodman 1964), David Milner's 1970s analysis of racism and racial awareness among children (Milner 1975), and John E. Williams and J. Kenneth Morland's 1970s study on young children to determine their racial awareness with regard to themselves and their society (Williams and Morland 1976). In all of these studies a majority of the black children had a negative self-image with some even preferring to identify as white rather than with their own race. They concluded that the dehumanisation of black people within all facets of society but especially the media and literature has fuelled the kind of self-rejection that they witness in many black children in their research.

2.4 Cultural Racism and New Forms of Domination

One of the proposed ways of dealing with this encroaching appropriation is to encourage local writers to write in indigenous languages using familiar images and settings, an approach referred to as "own syndrome" (Radebe 1995). It is believed that encouraging writers to write in their own languages will undermine the appropriation of the black voice and the misrepresentation of black culture by white writers. In recent works the issue has been a clear lack of cultural or racial understanding that results in some of the stereotyped black characters we encounter in texts rather than a wilful intent to misrepresent the other. It would be erroneous to portray the motivation of the modern day Bantuist as being identical to that of their predecessors. I would argue that the majority of the present day Bantuist is driven by good, if misguided, intention. However, impetus notwithstanding, the fact remains that white writers are still failing to give balanced portrayals of blackness and black cultures giving rise to the call for more culturally specific literature in the indigenous languages. Radebe rejects this proposition insisting that culturally specific literature has no place in today's world where the universality of the human experience is so much more pertinent than the specific histories and cultures of different people.

Whilst not rejecting the notion of the universality of the human experience I am reluctant to accept that it is so all encompassing that there is no room for culturally specific literature. The need for culturally specific literature is crucial in Africa especially within the areas of children and youth literature because there is such a dearth of it. An examination of the bookshops in South Africa is a clear illustration of this point. Very few indigenous language books are available in mainstream outlets for, especially, the black youth. Radebe's rejection of this suggestion is premature especially in South Africa where there is hardly any indigenous language literature. It is the contention of this thesis that South Africa does not even have an 'own' literature in the indigenous languages to reject.

If we are to accept this exclusion of literature written by indigenous people in their own languages we must ask ourselves this; if everyone is to stop writing in their own language about their own people, cultures and experiences what would they write about and in what language? The tacit assumption is that English, which is more universally spoken, is the preferred language in which to write these 'universal stories'. A very critical point that is continually overlooked in this recurrent battle between universality and cultural specificity is the simple fact that people write better in their own languages about their own experiences than they do about foreign experiences in equally foreign tongues. It is for this very reason that Bantuism, Orientalism and Aboriginalism arise, where the other assumes the licence to write the experiences of the other as though such experiences really were universal and therefore applicable to everyone.

The experience of apartheid is unique to South Africa, even if we accept that the experience of oppression is shared by a large and varied number of people globally, South Africa's experience of it differs from that of the rest of the world. Indeed the African experience of colonisation was different in each country and one cannot speak of the manifestation of that form of oppression as being common among Africans. That there are experiences that are universal cannot be denied, however, the ways in which these experiences affect, shape and are reacted to by countries, cities, households and individuals is unique and therefore not universalisable. Achebe (2000), responding to criticism of his work as being too culturally

specific pointed out that, especially with Western critics, as long as the novel has a western setting it is considered universal whereas anything that has an African setting is considered parochial and culturally specific²⁵.

In their analysis of youth literature in South Africa Maddy and MacCann (1996) rightly conclude that attempts at fusing African and Western cultures in some South African youth novels in order to create a common South African cultural identity have not only been largely unsuccessful, but are also undesirable. This is an attempt to expunge the clear cultural demarcations that enable cultural groups to identify themselves as being separate and distinct from other groups. This not only denies South African society its uniqueness, but also denies the various cultural groups the right to their own history, myths and culture. They correctly point out that there has not been any need to strip European works such as those by Hans Christian Andersen or the Brothers Grimm, of their distinctly European culture or mythology, yet their stories have managed to transcend racial, linguistic and cultural barriers. The universality of a text is not to be found in its depiction of a universal culture but rather in its ability to be accessible to different cultures universally.

Apart from the naivety of a belief in a “universal culture” there are two real dangers in such flawed logic. The first is that it is an enabling argument for the further appropriation, or worse the complete eradication, of the voices of marginal groups. For if we take this to its logical conclusion we can safely conclude that the subaltern²⁶ does not need their own voice with which to speak because if their experience of subjugation is universal it is no different to that of any other marginalised group, and it therefore little matters who expresses it as long as it is

²⁵ It is important to point out that while referring to an African setting as being culturally specific I do *not* intend to convey the notion that I think there is such a thing as an African culture. Van Vuuren (1994: 8) for example calls for a literature that is “African centred and that promotes African values and standards” thus homogenising the myriad African cultures. This idealised impression that there are things uniquely African that are applicable to an entire continent of diverse people forms part of the Bantuist ethos. The frequent harkening back to the innocent days of Africa, and a yearning for ‘African values’ forms part of the vocabulary of the Bantuist forever attempting to ossify African cultures in a time that never existed and therefore impossible to return to. That other cultures have changed dramatically over time is accepted as part of the dynamism of culture, but that African cultures are similarly dynamic seems harder for the Bantuist to accept. As already mentioned it is the position of this thesis that there are no values that can be said to adhere only to the African continent to the exclusion of the rest of the world.

²⁶ See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivack’s (1988) *Can the Subaltern Speak*.

expressed. The second danger lies in the fact that in our enthusiasm to be part of the global village and its attendant universal culture, we discard specific group cultures without a thorough assessment of exactly whose culture is being universalised. While pundits of a universal culture want to give the impression of a neutral all-encompassing culture that is simultaneously created by everyone and no-one, the glaring truth of a dominant culture attempting to absorb all others is impossible to deny.

What is conveyed by the term “universal” masks a contradictory reality and this is no different in literature from the political arena. What is referred to as a universal literature is nothing more than literature that is reflective of the dominant, currently western, culture. Dickens²⁷ novels though based in nineteenth century England are deemed universal because they deal with themes of social injustice and human suffering, themes which are common to all humanity thus rendering his work universal. Achebe’s work, on the other hand, though dealing with similar themes, is dismissed as lacking universality because it is set in a Nigeria at various stages of its political development in the 20th century. The battles for cultural dominance and survival have skewed our understanding of the universality of a text, which has little to do with setting, language or the cultural background of the writer. It is the dominant group within society that determines what constitutes universality and what books can be thus defined.

Contemporary society has very little tolerance for the exhibition of blatantly racist attitudes and so culture has become the new battlefield, the new vehicle for discrimination.

In the case of new racism, race is coded as culture. However, the central feature of these processes is that the qualities of social groups are fixed, made natural, and confined within a pseudo-biologically defined culturalism” (John Solomos and Les Back 1999: 72).

The current resurgence in cultural and religious allegiance is arguably a backlash against the encroaching global culture that is threatening marginal cultures and religions. However,

²⁷ That Dickens (1980) was himself a racist who strongly believed in slavery and could see injustice only as it applied to his own people does not detract from the universality of his work. Dickens’s racial prejudices are nowhere more succinctly articulated than in an article he wrote entitled *The Noble Savage*.

members of these cultural and religious groups are identified as marginal to more “mainstream” cultures and religions and therefore become the new sites of prejudice. Apartheid was the quintessential culturalist guise for racism, the apartheid racist ideology was presented as a cultural and linguistic preservation project aimed at ensuring the survival of all the various groups in South Africa as independent entities.

Rodolfo D. Torres, Louis F. Miron and Jonathan X. Inda (1999) point out that cultural racism initially appears in the guise of egalitarianism, giving equal recognition and respect to the different cultural groups. It begins with acknowledging that people observe different cultural practices and are inclined to clash. Therefore, in order for each cultural group to thrive it must exist in geographical isolation. However due to the extent of immigration, throughout particularly Europe and North America, there are an ever increasing number of cultural groups occupying an ever decreasing geographic space thus providing an enabling environment for cultural clashes. Fredrickson (2002: 4) concurs with this observation, stating that “the uses of allegedly deep-seated cultural differences as a justification for hostility and discrimination against newcomers from the third world in several European countries has led to allegations of a new ‘cultural racism’”²⁸.

Fredrickson (155) goes on further to emphasise the constructivist racial nature of some of these ethnic/racial identities that create groups of cultural or racial units when such amalgamations are not necessarily socially or historically accurate.

There are, however, cases – and African American ethnicity would be a prime example - in which ethnic identity is created by the racialization of people who would not otherwise have shared an identity.

This constructed identity, however, lacks the cohesion that would be found within organic cultural structures and has resulted in what Howard Winant (2000: 180) calls “*diasporic*

²⁸ Although Europe does not have the long history of settler immigration that the United States of America has, nor indeed in the numbers that have, and continue to, migrate to the USA for centuries it has encountered an increase in the number of immigrants it receives annually. Despite its post-colonial history of liberalism, Europe’s response to this new wave of immigration has been an increase in support for extreme right wing political parties preaching intolerance and xenophobia. For more on how this new cultural racism is unfolding in especially European countries and their responses to it see *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe: Racism, Identity and Community* Tariq Modood and Pnina Werbner (eds.) (1997).

identities”. That is, identities that are the result of migration bringing together people who might share a national identity but not necessarily a cultural one. Winant (180) however points out that:

transnational racial solidarity generally lacks the kind of political commitment and organization once displayed under the banner of the pan-African or the “non-aligned” movements. In this situation, nation-based theories of race have devolved into crude and retro forms of cultural nationalism, informed more by mysticism than by social analysis.

The influx of new national/cultural groups has, in recent past, become increasingly seen as a threat to the nation/culture of the host and one of the ways in which this has been counted has been to relegate non- native nations/cultures to the margins of the host society. The result is that members of non-indigenous cultural groups tend to be held responsible for a number of social and economic ills that beset the nation, and because the indigenous culture is given primacy it comes to be viewed as superior to the foreign cultures thus establishing, or indeed maintaining, a hierarchy and a new racism. Torres, Miron and Inda (1999) note the fact that most of the cultures that are subordinated are those belonging to those groups that would not be classified as white.

This assertion agrees with Roderick McGillis’s assertion (1995) that migrants are in a continual struggle against forces that create people of different cultures and races while at the same time attempting to assimilate these very cultures into one dominant culture in order for the dominant culture to maintain its position of power and authority. Cultural differences are magnified to emphasise the differences that exist between people and in so doing lure people into a single harmonising global culture that promises to, at the very least, minimise these differences, a culture, which everyone should aspire to be a part of. However this culture is created and controlled by the dominant group such that even if the subordinate groups become a part of it they are never equal. Feagin (2006: 25) asserts that:

Part of the comprehensive system of racism, today as in the past, is an intense cultural imperialism that entails the imposition of many white values and views on those who are oppressed. Whites have imposed the Eurocentric culture they inherited from their ancestors over many generations onto the everyday worlds of this society. They have

made a Eurocentric perspective into the national (and, indeed, world) standard for many things cultural and political.

There is an inherent contradiction in the global culture discourse in that even as this culture spreads and is adopted by ever increasing numbers of people it can never be a global culture. By its very nature, a global culture refers to a culture that is not only practiced by everyone, but one that recognises all adherents to it as equal. The mercantilist motives behind the current spread of Western culture, in conjunction with the racially hierarchical nature of its practice merely reveal more honestly its functionalist nature that annihilates other cultures in the rabid pursuit of political and economic power.

2.5 The Power of Knowledge and the Knowledge of Power

The construction of knowledge systems within a society and the dissemination of that knowledge is one of the key facets of this uneven power dynamic. The dominant group is able to not only, construct knowledge about itself, but the other as well while denying the knowledge systems of the other. “When ‘some groups’ knowledge [is defined] as the most legitimate, ... while other groups’ knowledge hardly sees the light of day, [this] says something extremely important about who has power in a society” (Apple as cited in Maddy and MacCann 1996: 5). Attwood (1992: i) elaborates on the nature of knowledge based on Foucault’s work:

Things or objects exist in the world, but knowledge establishes all the meanings they have. In other words, their ‘nature’ does not exist prior to knowledge for it is knowledge which creates their ‘truth’ and reality. ... the word constitutes the world, rather than the converse. Second, all knowledge is contingent, that is, knowledge is neither timeless nor universal, but relative to circumstances and particular (or partial). Knowledge is always situational - it is sought and acquired by individuals for some purpose or another, and as this changes what they ‘know’ will also shift. Third, all knowledge is political, that is, it is constructed by relationships of power – domination and subordination – and is inseparable from these.

The definitional, constructability and imprecise nature of knowledge is precisely where its power lies and the control of knowledge begets power and the possession of power begets the universalisability of constructed knowledge. The denial or eradication of the knowledge of the

other vests power and control with the eradicator and establishes power structures that are unequal and conducive to the domination of the weaker other.

The construction and/or control of knowledge about the other is only possible in an inequitable power relationship. However, this relationship between power and knowledge is a cyclical relationship wherein the possession of one of these factors in the equation enables domination; with knowledge comes power and with power comes the ability to acquire or create knowledge. Michel Foucault (1982: 220) argues that:

what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future... a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that 'the other' (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up.

He goes on to add that "power relations are rooted deep in the social nexus, not reconstructed 'above' society as a supplementary structure whose radical effacement one could perhaps dream of" (222). It is Foucault's assertion that another elemental feature of the power relationship is that the power is being exercised over free subjects because there is no power to be exercised over a bonded person; for power to be realisable the possibility of a loss of freedom must exist. In *Power/Knowledge* Foucault (1980: 88) defines power as "that concrete power which every individual holds, and whose partial or total cession enables political power or sovereignty to be established²⁹". This power enables the creation of knowledge about the

²⁹ Although Foucault's assertions would appear to be in concurrence with the Theory of the Social Contract as advanced by Locke (1946), Hobbes (1914) and Rousseau (1968) whereby the individual exists in a lawless state of nature and in order to survive surrenders some of their individual rights to a sovereign authority which then establishes law and order within the society, he in fact dismisses this theory in relation to power. Foucault argues instead that sovereign power has little to do with the exercise of power within the social arena and indeed the correlation between power and the economy, but above all, power and domination is far more compelling.

I would say that we should direct our researches on the nature of power not towards the juridical edifice of sovereignty, the State apparatuses and the ideologies which accompany them, but towards domination and the material operators of power, towards forms of subjugation and the inflection and utilisations of their localised systems, and towards strategic apparatuses. ... We must escape from the limited field of juridical sovereignty and State institutions, and instead base our analysis of power on the study of the techniques and tactics of domination (Foucault 1982: 102).

subject over whom power is wielded while simultaneously enabling the use this constructed knowledge to concretise this power (Foucault 1982: 221).

The power to construct and represent the other in South Africa has been the reserve of the white minority. Until fairly recently most South African youth novels were not only being written by white writers but were almost always written from a white perspective. However even now when black characters are becoming a more regular feature in South African novels written by white writers, the perspective and representation of history is still predominantly white. The power and the production of knowledge remains firmly in white hands and Attwood (1992: iii) rightly asks the very questions that recur throughout this thesis: “who produces this knowledge, when and where? About, and for, whom is this knowledge; for what purpose is this knowledge created? How and in what form is it produced; and what are the effects of this knowledge?” White dominance of South African society for decades has ensured their control over knowledge production and has enabled the construction the other and guaranteed their continued dominance. The literary production of white writers in South Africa is reflective not only of this power relationship, but also the way in which the socio-political changes in the country influence the manifestation of this relationship.

In her book on the representation of blackness, bell hooks (1992), warns against the current preoccupation with the mere discussion of how blackness is represented. She argues that the debate needs to move beyond good and bad images, which, although important, offer no solution to transcending what is fast becoming a stagnation in the debate. It is her contention that we should now be looking at not just the negative aspects of these representations, but offering suggestions for how to move beyond this point.

[T]he issue of race and representation is not just a question of critiquing the *status quo*. It is also about transforming the image, creating alternatives, and asking ourselves questions about what types of images subvert, pose critical alternatives, and transform our worldviews and move us away from dualistic thinking about good and bad (4).

Whilst not disagreeing with hooks’ general sentiment it is the contention of this thesis that within the South African context in particular, there is still a need to *begin* the process of

identifying and amplifying inappropriate representation. The debate, within South Africa, is still primarily at the level of identifying good and bad images as well as questioning the appropriateness of white authorship of black reality. Eventually it needs to start moving beyond this as suggested by hooks, but that process can only be undertaken once the debate on the nature of the representation has been adequately engaged with. The liberalism that is to be found in current South African youth literature, though no doubt inspired by a 'non-racial' discourse, is potentially a new form of appropriation and domination of the other and therefore requires closer examination.

2.6 The Construction of Race

However, a discussion of new forms of domination needs to be couched in an understanding of the old forms of domination, where they emanate from, and what has led to their metamorphosis. The concept of race has been such an elemental feature of everyday life that we seldom question it. We have come to regard the physiological differences that distinguish groups of people, such as skin tone and hair texture, as the natural manifestation of race and this has been reinforced by society and politics that we do not even question its validity as a human classificatory mechanism. Race theorists maintain that the concept of race is a social and historical construct, which is so entrenched in our psyche and social engagement that society has come to accept it unquestioningly as natural.

The construction of race is as much an accepted notion among race theorists as the naturalness of race is among the general population. They argue that our current understanding of race is founded on a socio-political construct. According to Michael Omi and Howard Winant (2002: 15):

Race is indeed a pre-eminently *socio-historical* concept. Racial categories and the meaning of race are given concrete expression by the specific social relations and historical context in which they are embedded. Racial meanings have varied tremendously over time and between different societies.

Omi and Winant (1994)³⁰ go on to elaborate on this constructed notion of race by introducing the term “racial formation”, to refer to the process of the creation of racial categories within society. They define racial formation as:

the process by which social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meaning. Crucial to this formulation is the treatment of race as a *central axis* of social relations which cannot be subsumed under or reduced to some broader category or conception. (*Emphasis in Original*)

This constructivist view of race is affirmed by Maddy and MacCann (1996) who regard the concept of race as being adaptable and lithe, deriving its meaning from the racialisation of relationships and social conditions. The process of the creation of race is expanded upon by Robert Miles and Rodolfo D. Torres (1999: 21), who argue that in order for race to be valid people are differentiated in accordance with their biological characteristics which are defined as race:

This language of “race” was usually anchored in the signification of certain forms of somatic difference (skin color, facial characteristics, body shape and size, eye color, skull shape) which were interpreted as the physical marks which accompanied, and which in some unexplained way, determined, the “nature” of those so marked³¹.

These racial groups are then ranked into superior and inferior using ‘intelligence’ as the basis for this ranking and since these physiological distinctions are all pre-social they are considered natural and therefore accurate, thus confirming the rankings.

Winant (2000: 172) points to the physical foundations of the establishments of race but also the uses these superficial differences have been put to; “race can be defined as a *concept that signifies and symbolizes sociopolitical conflicts and interests in reference to different types of human bodies*”(emphasis in original). Acknowledging the existence of physical differences between the different groups of people that are referred to as racial groups, Torres et al. (1999)

³⁰ See also Joe Feagin (2006: 6).

³¹ In this paper Miles and Torres look at how the use of race as an analytical tool can serve to counter anti-racism campaigns. In arguing against prejudicial treatment and stereotyping by pointing to the differences between the “races”, anti-racism campaigns simultaneously reaffirm commonly held notions of difference and their attendant prejudices.

point out that despite these differences there is no basis in nature for a race/intelligence correlation, as this correlation is nothing more than a social construct motivated by historical, political and economic considerations. There is no biological basis for dividing the human species into groups based on the idea that certain physical characteristics are tied to behaviour, intelligence or morality. Omi and Winant (2002: 17) state that:

Racial beliefs operate as an “amateur biology,” a way of explaining the variations in “human nature”. Differences in skin color and other obvious physical characteristics supposedly provide visible clues to differences lurking underneath. Temperament, sexuality, intelligence, athletic ability, aesthetic preferences and so on are presumed to be fixed and discernible from the palpable mark of race.

That race is based on a biological referent is not disputed; however it is a biological referent that is socially manipulated and used not to define, but rather to judge groups of people in a given place and time based on their physical attributes, for as C. Loring Brace (2005: 4) declares unequivocally “there is no biological justification for the concept of race” . Because race is a bringing together of a number of different elements that exist independently of each other it is a fluid and unfixed concept that can assume multiple meanings, such that even though race appears to be a natural phenomenon it is nothing more than a social and historical construct.

According to Nicholas Hudson (1996) and Coco Fusco (2003), the current definition of race only emerged in seventeenth century. Prior to that the term race was used in relation to family lines and breeds of animals. Guillaumin (1999: 41) states that:

[t]he word “race” ... originally had a very precise sense: it meant “family” or, more accurately, “family relationship.” Moreover, it was only ever applied to important dynasties. ... In no way was it applied at that time to large groups of people with no legal link of kinship between them. From referring to legally circumscribed, noble families, it shifted to being applied to much wider groups, the attribution to whom some common physical trait served as a pretext for designating them as a single entity, now called a “race”.

The fact that this newly expanded definition of race gained prominence at the point when European colonial engagement with the rest of the world was intensifying lends credence to the assertion that race is not only a social construct but indeed a creature of its time. This point

is similarly raised by Said (2003) with regard to western encroachment on the Orient. Fusco (2003: 35) notes that theories of white superiority also gained ground around the same time that European colonialism was at its height.

The assertion that racial construction is informed by its time is confirmed by Thomas Holt, (2000: 21) who states that:

[t]he idea that race is socially constructed implies also that it can and must be constructed differently at different historical moments and in different social contexts. And one of the implications of taking seriously this historicity of race – that there are historically specific “racisms” and not a singular ahistorical racism – is the analytic necessity of exploring how racial phenomena articulate with other social phenomena.

The historically deterministic nature of race and the influences of economic, political and social realities in determining its manifestation are factors that cannot be overlooked in any analysis of race. Michael Omi (2001: 254) finds that:

Racial meanings are profoundly influenced by state definitions and discursive practices. They are also shaped by interaction with prevailing forms of gender and class formation. An examination of both these topics reveals the fundamental instability of racial categories, their historically contingent character, and the ways they articulate with other axes of stratification and “difference”. ... The idea of “race” and its persistence as a social category is only given meaning in a social order structured by forms of inequality – economic, political, and cultural - that are organized, to a significant degree, along racial lines.

This is the point that is illustrated by Jan Nederveen Pieterse (1992) as he traces the representations of blackness in western iconography. He notes that the nature or the state of the relationship between black and white throughout history has determined how blackness is depicted by whites in popular media. Coco Fusco and Brian Wallis (2003: 47) use photography to illustrate a similar point about not only the relationships between the races but also the way in which images have been used historically to advance ideology and ways of seeing the other: “[p]hotography acts as a site and agent for the enunciation of racial history”. The function of photography in illuminating ideology is affirmed by Nicholas Mirzoeff (2003: 111) who states that “the photograph is a screen upon which wider social forces become

visible. Racism thus exists and photography makes it visible. But it is a process in which a “nothing” is made visible by something that does not exist”.

Even among those race theorists who are in tacit agreement that race is largely a constructed function of economics, history and politics there is an acknowledgement that the sociological understanding of race by which society is currently structured cannot be so easily dismissed or overlooked (Fusco 2003; Guillaumin 1999; Solomos and Back 1999; Winant 2000; Outlaw 1996; Omi 2001; Powell 1999). Integral to their argument is the fact that race has become so fundamental a facet of our society and the ways in which we engage with each other that to dismiss it as a mere biological myth is to overlook its significance in shaping historical events and contemporary society’s power dynamics. Outlaw (1996: 7-8) rejects this blanket dismissal of race and claims to its nonexistence:

I wish to argue against those who regard raciality and ethnicity (and gender) as nothing more than arbitrary, fluid, socially contestable “fictive,” “imagined,” or “ideological” “social constructions,” that, according to some persons, are not even *real* even though real enough in what are regarded as their social or “material” effects.

Outlaw is cognisant of the fact that people identify and are identified in accordance with their race and it is this societal racial organising structure that makes race impossible to ignore or treat as an inconsequential element of the social equation. He bases his strong assertion on the fact that:

It has not come to pass that physical and cultural differences among groups of peoples in terms of which they continue to be identified, and to identify themselves, as races and ethnicities have either ceased to exist or ceased to be taken as highly important in the organization of society especially in situations where there is competition for resources thought vital to lives organized, to significant extents, through racial and/or ethnic identities. (11)

Omi (2001: 243) recognises that “there is an enormous gap between the scientific rejection of race as a concept, and the popular acceptance of it as an important organizing principle of individual identity and collective consciousness”. Part of the reason for this gap is the fact that race, as stated, is the locus around which individual and group identities stem in contemporary society. This is enhanced by the fact that historical events pivotal to the creation of today’s

society have hinged not only on our current understanding of race, but also on the distinction, separation and subordination of one racial group by another. Whether it is traditional racism that led to slavery, colonialism and apartheid or neo-racism (Hutu/Tutsi, Arab/Israel, Catholic/Protestant, North/South Sudan) that pits cultural or religious groups against each other what is important to note is that racial distinction has for centuries been used to create social cleavages that enable one segment of society to dominate the other through, or for, the control of political power and/or economic resources.

The construction of race naturally leads to the manufacture of racial difference, then distinction and finally superiority. This was the method used by western colonisers to distinguish themselves from the other races they encountered in the foreign lands they travelled, conquered and colonised:

Coupled with this “your land and labour are mine” ethic were two associated perspectives: An ethnocentrism asserting European superiority in culture (especially religion) and society, and a xenophobia showing hostility to indigenous peoples and holding that they were not really human. European colonialists generally held a view of their cultural (later racial) superiority, a superiority that in their view gave them the right to prey on and dominate other peoples. In addition, European colonialists typically viewed indigenous people as dangerous and uncivilized “savages” to be overcome, not as fully human beings (Feagin 2006: 11).

These assertions of racial superiority were then given credence by western scientists who found ‘evidence’ to support the notion of superior white intelligence. The idea of the supremacy of the white races over the black races was first mythologized through Christianity³² and later given weight by early anthropologists and scientists (Maddy and MacCann 1996; Pieterse 1992; Dubow 1992 and 1995; Omi and Winant 2002 and Fredrickson 2002). Scientists from as early as the eighteenth century have variously maintained that certain physiological traits such as skin colour and body type were linked to behaviour, intelligence and morality rendering race, and more pointedly the superiority of the white race,

³² The entry of academia and especially science into the debate about the preordained superiority of the white race above all other races was just the validation Christianity needed to concretise its assertion. Thereafter little doubt would remain in the minds of the majority of white people that they were inherently superior to the black inhabitants of the earth. See also Pieterse (1992).

an indisputable natural phenomenon³³ (Fusco 2003; Guillaumin 1999; and Mirzoef 2003). But as Robert Miles and Rodolfo D. Torres (1999 20) point out:

the biological and genetic sciences established conclusively in the light of empirical evidence that the attempt to establish the existence of different types or “races” of human being by scientific procedures had *failed*. The idea that the human species consists of a number of distinct “races,” each exhibiting a set of discrete physical and cultural characteristics is therefore *false, mistaken* (emphasis added).

In furtherance to Miles and Torres’s assertion Omi (2001 243) states that “[b]iologists, geneticists, and physical anthropologists, among others, long ago reached a common understanding that race is not a “scientific” concept rooted in discernible biological differences”.

Since race is essentially a construct, in order for a group to be defined as a racial group it must be made or categorised as one. A group cannot become a racial group outside of the active forces that construct it. Therefore a racial group, to become such, must undergo a racialization process, which, according to Robert Miles (1989 75) is “the instance where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectives”. Race has importance in our society because it is the means by which people understand and order their reality as well as the means by which social hierarchies are produced and maintained.

Fusco (2003: 34) illustrates the importance of race as an organising facet of our society in *Only Skin Deep* and states that her book “posits race as a historically rooted myth through which we read physical appearance, a conceptual crutch that we use to organize humanity into culturally meaningful groupings”. Miles and Torres (1999: 20) made a similar assertion,

³³ To a large extent this erroneous notion that you can ascribe intelligence in accordance with race rather than the individual persists to this day. A 1994 publication by Hernstein and Murray entitled *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* asserted that whites were more intelligent than blacks as a general rule (Robert Miles and Rodolfo D. Torres 1999: 25). As recently as 2007 James Watson, a renowned scientist declared that blacks were genetically pre-programmed to be less intelligent than whites. See Derbyshire (2007).

arguing that “because people believe that “races” exist (i.e. because they utilize the *idea* of “race” to comprehend their social world), social scientists need a *concept* of ‘race’”.

It is important to note that the process of racialisation is not the same as racism. The categorisation of people into different groups based on biological abstractions is racialism.³⁴ However, using those biological abstractions to justify the unequal treatment of one or more groups within the society is racism. Fredrickson (2002: 5) says that racism begins when “differences that might be considered ethnocultural are regarded as innate, indelible, and unchangeable”. What is usually referred to as racism is the system of exclusion and marginalisation that is commonly introduced through the use of binary opposites.

These binary opposites are established in such a way as to attribute what is considered acceptable and unacceptable, civilised and uncivilised, natural and intellectual, moral and immoral to skin colour which, being a natural feature, makes anything pertaining to it therefore equally natural (Torres et al. 1999). Fredrickson (2002: 1) states that “[t]he term ‘racism’ is often used in a loose and unreflective way to describe the hostile or negative feelings of one ethnic group or ‘people’ toward another and the actions resulting from such attitudes”. However, racism does not exist for its own sake, like race it serves a specific function of not only exclusion and denigration of one group in society, but also the elevation of the status of another group within the same society.

This assertion is affirmed by Omi (2001: 257) who points out that the term racism was “originally used to characterize the ideology of white supremacy that was buttressed by biologically based theories of superiority/inferiority”. This function of racism is elaborated upon by Outlaw (1996: 8) in his definition of racism where he stipulates not only what racism is, but equally important its function:

Racism and invidious ethnocentrism are best understood as sets of beliefs, images, and practices that are “imbued with negative valuation” and employed as modes of exclusion, inferiorization, subordination, and exploitation in order to deny targeted

³⁴ It could be argued the racialism is the birthplace of racism. For in the absence of the categorisation of people into racial groups, the use of those categories to emphasise difference would not be possible and therefore neither would racism.

racial or ethnic groups full participation in the social, political, economic, and cultural life of a political community.

It is the point at which racial identification is used for targeted and exclusionary purposes that it becomes insidious racism. The historical manifestations of racism such as the slave trade, colonialism and apartheid might mislead one into thinking that racism is necessarily violent or overtly oppressive. Outlaw's definition emphasises the fact that this need not be the case. Even in instances where acts of violence or aggression are not carried out racism can still exist as long as a group or groups within society are made to feel inferior to other groups and/or denied access or the ability to exercise or realise their full rights. The construction of race begets racism, and both of these are necessary in order to sustain the dominance of one group over another. Political and economic power and historical modalities are significant factors determining the ways in which racial politics are played out within society.

Magubane (2001: 4) asserts that racism is not simply about the material exploitation of the other, but a process of producing forms of knowledge, which are then used to justify the subjugation of the exploited group. It also marks out the superior group in the equation whilst at the same time regulating all aspects of the life of the inferior party. He goes on to add that the term race and the ideology of racism serve merely to justify the degradation and inhuman treatment of one group whilst at the same time elevating the dominant group to the status of "Lords of Humanity", which in the South African context is the white group. He points out that in a white slave owning community freedom is defined by the slavery of the other.

2.7 The Functionality and Construction of Blackness

A natural follow on to a discussion of the construction of race is to look specifically at the construction of blackness itself. The construction of race occurred concurrently with the construction of blackness as a definitive racial signifier of not just physical difference but moral and intellectual inferiority. The assertion of white superiority was not sufficient in and of itself, the construction of the less able black other was necessary to validate the questionable claims of white supremacy which were founded on nothing but the claim itself. Feagin (2006: 15) adds that:

the European American colonialists developed the relatively new and distinctive term “white” for themselves in the last half of the seventeenth century mainly to contrast themselves to those they had named as “blacks”. Prior to that time, European colonists mostly distinguish themselves as “Christians” in counterpoint to “Negroes” and “Indians”. About 1680, they began contrasting themselves as “white” with “Negroes” and soon with “blacks” (or “Africans”).

Feagin’s assertion clearly illustrates the point that is raised in the chapter with regard to the construction of blackness and whiteness as necessary for the affirmation of the inferiority of one race and the superiority of the other. He goes on to argue that in addition to recognising the functionality of the construction of the races, it is important to take cognisance of the fact that whites are the “central propagators and agents” (5) in the social drama of racial discrimination and oppression.

An important facet of the construction of the other is the manner in which the other is represented. This representation is not the neutral process of recognising the specificity of one’s own culture when viewed in relation to other cultures, but rather the mechanisms with which white cultures reduce other cultures to a mere function towards the realisation of whiteness or as an illustration of the superiority of the white race. This sentiment is succinctly expressed by Fusco (2003: 38), who notes that:

Whiteness often requires otherness to become visible. White people look whiter when there are non-white people around them. Whiteness can also be articulated as the capacity to masquerade as a racial other without actually being one. Whiteness emerges most clearly when it can mould others into an imitation of itself.

The relationship between these two constructed races presents racial discourses that are simultaneously symbiotic and oppositional. The existence of whiteness necessitates the existence of blackness, which is its life force, but also its binary opposite. However, the fact that blackness and whiteness are mutually sustaining does not mean that they are mutually beneficial. The existence of blackness enables whiteness to continue not merely as whiteness but as the superior other, its ability to sustain this position of dominance is contingent on the continuance of blackness. Blackness on the other hand does not require whiteness for its continuance, in fact the existence of the ideology of whiteness acts as an inhibitor to the

actualisation of blackness because it is negatively constructed. Morrison (1993. 52) concisely puts it thus:

Africanism is the vehicle by which the American self knows itself as not enslaved, but free; not repulsive, but desirable; not helpless, but licensed and powerful; not history-less, but historical; not damaged but innocent; not a blind accident of evolution, but a progressive fulfilment of destiny.

The creation of blackness and whiteness was an ideological contrivance to justify the oppression of the black race in the practice of slavery and the colonial adventure. But it also served the secondary function of unifying white people in that oppression. It did not suffice to create blackness as an underclass preordained to be second-class citizens in servitude to whites, because the economic benefits of being white did not extend to the entire white race. It therefore became necessary to create the concept of whiteness with, if nothing else, the social and psychological benefits of not being black. Attwood (1992: iii) points out that:

It is generally acknowledged that, at least since the Enlightenment, the category of the 'self' or the group is fashioned through the construction of the 'Other', which is outside and opposite, and that the making of an identity rests upon negating, repressing or excluding things antithetical to it. By creating such binary opposition(s), the heterogeneity and difference with the former category is displaced and so the unitary self or group is manufactured. In this process there is clearly an interdependence of the two categories, that is, they only make sense in the context of each other. One should also note that this interdependence is usually hierarchical, with one category prior, visible and superordinate, the other secondary, often invisible and subordinate.

In his discussion of antebellum and post-bellum race relations in America W.E.B. Du Bois (1975) points out the fact that central to all considerations of black emancipation was not the moral question, but rather the economic impact of freeing the slaves with particular consideration of how it might affect white workers. He notes that among poor white workers maintaining the racial distinction of their whiteness was of the utmost importance. Despite their own impoverishment and exploitation white workers were unwilling to join forces with black labour to ensure better wages and conditions for themselves and black workers:

Considering the economic rivalry of the black and white worker in the North, it would have seemed natural that the poor white would have refused to police the slaves. But

two considerations led him in the opposite direction. First of all, it gave him work and some authority as overseer, slave driver and member of the patrol system. But above and beyond this, it fed his vanity because it associated him with the masters. Slavery bred in the poor white a dislike of Negro toil of all sorts. He never regarded himself as a labourer, or part of any labor movement. If he had any ambition at all it was to become a planter and to own “niggers.” To these Negroes he transferred all the dislike and hatred which he had for the whole slave system. (Du Bois 1975: 12)

The white workers saw the privileges of whiteness as adequate compensation for their exploitation and exclusion from whites in the upper classes. The minor benefits that accrued to them because of their whiteness served not only to distinguish them from black workers, but also to quell any revolutionary impulse they might have harboured. White workers were willing to overlook their common oppression with equally poor black workers for the privileges that whiteness conferred upon them. Thus accepting a substandard existence coated with a sprinkling of white privilege rather than ally themselves with black workers which in essence would be an admission that their lives were no better than those of poor blacks.

Du Bois’ observations are also noted by Roediger (1991) who states that the construction of the black and white races in the United States of America was part of the process of creating unity among the whites. John Hartigan Jr. (1999) points out that disparities between rich and poor whites was such that blackness was necessary to construct in order to “soften class and ethnic antagonisms among whites, subordinating internal conflicts to the unifying conception of race” (Cell as cited in John Hartigan 1999: 189). The possibility of distancing themselves from a vilified segment of society by the mere distinction of their whiteness was sufficient cause for white workers to align themselves with other whites. According to Omi and Winant (2002: 18):

With the end of the Reconstruction of 1877, an effective program for limiting the emergent class struggles of the later nineteenth century was forged: the definition of the working class in *racial terms* –as “white”. This was not accomplished by any legislative decree or capital manoeuvring to divide the working class, but rather by white workers themselves.

This alliance between white workers and white capital subdued any potential threats of a class uprising as a direct response to the increasing disparities between working class whites and their wealthy white counterparts. But because white workers preferred their racial identity to

their class³⁵ identity any kind of rebellion of black and white workers against white capital to demand social, political and economic justice for all workers was deferred. The perpetuated myth of white superiority was given further credence by the choice made by white workers.

In order to enhance the perception of whiteness as superior the representation of blackness as inferior was undertaken. The most commonly used tool of misrepresentation has arguably been stereotyping. The manufacturing and perpetuation of negative and fallacious images of the other and presenting them as facts applicable to every black person has formed an integral part of the social engineering of race. This stereotyping of blackness has largely been the same the world over and so too in South Africa blacks were depicted as lazy, immature, lascivious children. This portrayal is usually in conjunction with images of blacks in the designated role of the servant or the helpless incompetent requiring white assistance in order to advance. And in these depictions white notions of both themselves and the other are reinforced.

It is a commonly held belief that whites also have to contend with being stereotyped, especially in popular culture. However, Richard Dyer (1997) does not agree this assertion and it is his contention that whiteness is so privileged in popular representation that whites are not stereotyped in terms of their whiteness but in terms of other things such as gender, nation, class or sexuality. The fact of their whiteness is incidental to the stereotyping. It is his perception that, whereas subordinate groups are presented through stereotypes, white people are not. Instead white people are seen to be infinitely varied and only by virtue of belonging to other groups are they stereotyped.

Stereotypes of white liberals or Afrikaans farmers among others are replete in South African literature, and therein is the proof of Dyer's argument. The stereotype is of the liberal who

³⁵ The materiality of class lends itself to be easily distinguishable from race, because there are tangible differences between rich and poor, which do not necessarily exist between the races. Although many would argue that class is not necessarily about economics, it is the opinion of this study that class derives largely from economics and since class distinctions are no longer rigidly adhered to one can, through the acquisition of sufficient wealth, 'buy' their way into the 'upper' classes in society. It is this possibility of change that distinguishes class from race. Fredrickson (2002: 7) points out that like class, but unlike race, religion and culture also offer the possibility of change. Whereas race confines one to one's predestined biological identifier with no hope of change, changes in class, religion and culture are always possible, especially in today's society.

also happens to be white, or the Afrikaans farmer who happens to be white, it is their politics and their nationality respectively that is stereotyped and not their race. The stereotype of the liberal could not be applied to the Afrikaans farmer and vice versa, whereas stereotypes about blacks can be applied in equal measure to a black South African feminist or a Sudanese doctor. It is the applicability of stereotyping that enables one to determine whether the stereotype is a racial one or a more narrowly defined group stereotype that applies either to a cultural, religious or social group. For instance, homosexual stereotypes are applicable to all homosexuals without regard to race; equally stereotypes about feminists are similarly racially non discriminating.

These representations of whiteness might reflect stock characters that are repeatedly referenced in literature, but they are not necessarily stereotypes. Kenneth Parker (1978: 8) points out that stock characterisation was not only applied to the portrayal of black characters but white ones as well. He points out that especially among white English liberal writers opposed to apartheid a characterisation trend was established for various segments of the society. These characters were not necessarily stereotypes but an almost recurring identical feature in most books, he notes that in most South African novels:

all Afrikaners are baddies; all blacks are goodies - unless they are politicians, in which case they are corrupt; all priests are goodies, although white priests and Anglican priests in particular, are better goodies than black priests; all black creative artists are potential genius material; the 'problem' (that is apartheid) is capable of simple solutions if we all decide to be nice to each other in our personal relationships - a sort of South African 'only connect'; industrialisation has destroyed the self-contained albeit quaint and picturesque life of the blacks, who, in their 'natural state' have a 'heart of white'.

C. R. Botha (2002) looks at white stereotypes in Xhosa literature and although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore this area extensively, it is illustrative to look at a white perspective of white stereotypes by black writers in a thesis looking at black stereotypes by white writers from a black perspective. In his paper, Botha argues that early Xhosa novels either did not have any white characters in them or very few and the ones that were featured were depicted in stereotype. However, it is the counter argument of this thesis that Botha's understanding of stereotypes, based on the examples he cites, is not consistent with what

would be generally regarded as stereotyping. The portrayal of negative, caricatured or bland white characters does not equate to stereotyping. A negatively portrayed character of any particular race is not necessarily a stereotypical portrayal. The moment we conflate villainous characterisations with stereotyping simply because the writer is from a different racial group from the character in question we are entering dangerous terrain.

In addition to the above Botha fails to take into account that the novels he is analysing were written during an era of white oppression and the ways in which the white characters are portrayed is, in all likelihood, representative of the experiences and interactions that the authors had either witnessed or experienced for themselves. Botha's assertions of white stereotyping fail to take into cognisance the fact that there are no white stereotypes. There are stereotypes of sub-groups to which white people belong, either exclusively or with other racial groups, but, there are no stereotypes of white people that can be applied exclusively to whites and across all sub-groups.

Botha's analysis does raise a most pertinent question to be taken into account in any critical analysis of a novel especially with regard to stereotypes; do we regard a characterisation as stereotyped because it is portrayed by the other? By which I mean, having identified a black character as being presented as a stereotype in a novel by a white writer, would the same character be similarly viewed if the novel was written by a black novelist? Interpretative textual analysis is greatly influenced by the perception and ideology of the critic as well, the ways in which we interpret characters in the novel has a great deal to do with our own history, background and perspective and as with the writer of texts, the ideology of the critic also plays a significant role in the interpretative process³⁶.

³⁶ This is a point that Sole (1993) also raises with regard to white critics of black writing. He maintains that the white critic like the writer does not appreciate his own stance with regard to black writing and so applies to the critical approach of this work his own white middle class aesthetics and values which are not informed by black realities. This is precisely the point made by Stephens (1992), Hollindale (1992), Crosman (1980) and Iser (1980) about the influence of ideology within the text and although their primary focus is on the ideology of the writer their argument can be applied to that of the critic as well in their evaluation of a text. I concur with Sole's assertions with regard to western critics. The issue at hand is that white critics continue to apply their own values to the critical process, and persist in the futile exercise of comparing African writings to western classics when they should focus on the quality of the writing and not the proximity of its imitation of western literature. Continual comparisons with western writers and always found wanting will be the perpetual response to African literature as long as the fact that it is a different literary style is equated with an inferior literature.

Dyer's (1997) book looks at whiteness only and deliberately does not look at whiteness in relation to other races because the author feels that the use of the black/white binary as an analytical tool also serves to reinforce the black/white dichotomy, which is a necessary facet of the construction of whiteness. Dyer notes that it is imperative that whiteness be looked at in, and, of itself and not in relation to other races because whiteness reproduces itself all the time in all forms. Dyer's observations about whiteness illuminate the ways in which whites have constructed and sustained the notion of their inherent superiority to such an extent that white has become the common human denominational norm against which all other races are measured. He goes on to point out that whites, by virtue of their "humanness", speak for all of humanity, whilst other races only speak for their particular racial group. Because of its humanness white is not usually considered a race like other races and it is therefore essential to racialise whiteness in order to dislodge its power. This observation is confirmed by Powell (1999: 147) who states that "[w]hile the law spent a great deal of effort to define the racial 'other,' whites are largely defined in opposition to the racial other and as pure".

Whiteness then becomes the racial norm, requiring neither definition nor elaboration. This "normalisation" of whiteness is observed by Solomos and Back (1999: 75) who note that "[i]n these representations, whiteness is equated with normality and, as such, it is not in need of definition. Thus 'being normal' is colonized by the idea of 'being white'". In an effort to illustrate the unconscious normalisation of whiteness Alistair Bonnett (1999: 205) cites the example of The Inner London Education Authority's anti-racist policy documents in which white

is the only "racial" noun mentioned in the main text whose meaning is not explained. Thus white is allowed to "speak for itself". It is permitted the privilege of having an obvious meaning; of being a normal rather than exceptional case; of being a defining, not a defined category.

Dyer agonises over the proper term to use when referring to various racial groups that are not included in the term white, and in so doing he is giving due acknowledgement to the importance of definition and labelling and how these have been used as a tool of subversion throughout history. The significance of Dyer's process of deciding what term to use for the various groups can be so easily overlooked and yet it represents one of the most important

facets of the construction of race, labelling. Labelling enables the process of defining and categorising and is therefore a vital part of the process of race construction as it determines who falls into what category of racial definition and by virtue of that, what tier in the hierarchy they belong. As in all societies where different race groups co-exist multiracial progeny has been the result, murkyng the waters of racial purity and disrupting the meticulously ordered and defined racial categories.

In reference to an essay by Crouch (1996) entitled *Race is Over* Omi (2001: 247) argues that “[m]ultiraciality disrupts our fixed notions about race and opens up new possibilities with respect to dialogue and engagement across the colour line. It does not, however, mean that “race is over”. Omi’s point is proven by the ever increasing racial/cultural sub-categories that have been devised in order to overcome the problems created by interracial offspring all of which enable the defining of multiracial people as either members of separate and distinct racial groups or as part of any other racial group, except white³⁷. This need to maintain the purity of whiteness is noted by Fredrickson (2002: 3) with particular regard to apartheid’s anti-miscegenation legislation:

the laws passed banning all marriage and sexual relations between different “population groups” and requiring separate residential areas for people of mixed race (“Coloureds”), as well as for Africans signified the same obsession with “race purity” that characterized ... other racist regimes.

The method of categorising and defining is not important in and of itself: what is important is its necessity in keeping the groups separate and, with regard to whites, unsullied.

³⁷ The United States of America had the one-drop policy that defined as black anyone with even a single drop of black blood www.wordiq.com. This policy is based on the *hypodescent rule* which attests to the purity of white blood which is therefore contaminated by the introduction of even a single drop of black blood (Powell 1999: 146) and (Omi 2001: 248). In South Africa various means were also devised to distinguish pure whites from those merely passing for white. One of the most famous techniques was the pencil test by which the ability of a pencil to stay in the hair determined the degree of blackness. The more textured and curly the hair the more likely the pencil was to hold, thus indicating that the person had black ancestry. For more on the pencil test see Deborah Posel (2001) and Pippa de Bruyn (2009). In Australia anyone with at least one sixteenth Aboriginal blood is considered Aboriginal (Marie Reay 1951) For Aboriginal classification and identity with regard to the blood quantum laws see John Gardiner-Garden (2000) and Australian Law Reform Commission Report 31 1986.

Literature is quite possibly one of the most influential components in the process of constructing the other. The most commonly held perceptions of the other are disseminated and popularised through literature. Morrison (1993: 39) is of the notion that “cultural identities are formed and informed by a nations’ literature”. She goes on to add that:

narrative is used for discourse on ethics, social and universal codes of behaviour, and assertions about and definitions of civilization and reason. ... narrative is used in the construction of a history and a context for whites by positing history-lessness and context-lessness for blacks (Morrison 1993: 53).

The result is a master narrative that speaks for, or of, the other, denying them a voice to speak for themselves. In this she is supported by Said (2003) who places great emphases on the role played by literature in the devising of an Oriental other. Literature’s role in society has long been acknowledged, what is lagging behind is an awareness of the impact and influence of literature within racial discourse. As works of fiction, novels present a fictional world for the entertainment of the reader, but regardless of the fictionalised drama of the novel its impact on the reader and its capacity for informing and influencing the reader’s perspective remains significant.

2.8 Conclusion

The creation of race has been such a pivotal part of the process of subjugation that racial difference is no longer even questioned. However, it is vital that an understanding of the process of racial construction is devised in order to be better able to counter the effects of racial prejudice. Within the South African context Bantuism has been the result of the racial politics of colonialism and apartheid. In devising the theory of Bantuism I localise the experience of racism with the South African historical paradigm in order to give contextual relevance to our understanding of the racial underpinning of the literature in question. It is the assertion of this thesis that in conjunction with an understanding of the history and function of race construction, it is imperative to look at the construction of whiteness as well as blackness. Because blacks have been the subordinate group for so long greater emphasis has been placed on looking at the depictions of blackness in isolation of the concomitant constructions of whiteness, which necessitate and reinforce the construction of the other. Uncritical analyses

informed by a tacit acceptance of the racial status quo have led to Bantuist theories and analytical approaches to the evaluation of literature among other things. It is critical to historicise race and place it within its proper political context in order to be able to critically evaluate and understand the literature of a period and place.

The changes that have occurred in our societies over the last few centuries have had an enormous and lasting impact on both the society and the individual. The process of constructing race has been used to determine the nature of racial engagement resulting in the subjugation of some groups by others. Hall, Held and McGrew (1992) note that the structural changes that are transforming modern societies have fragmented previously held cultural concepts of gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, race and nationality which were the very things that previously anchored us as social beings. These transformations are directly impacting on our personal identities and our senses of self and this double displacement both from our social and individual selves they call the dislocation, the de-centring of the subject and it is leading to an identity crisis. It is their assertion that identity is only said to be in crisis when it is in question or threatened.

They define identity as the interaction between the self and society. While the subject has an inner core that they deem to be their real self this is informed and modified through a continual dialogue with their society. Our identity is a process of internalising the values and meanings of the social and cultural world we occupy thus cementing us to our society. However, with the changes in our society this fixed relationship is changing and fragmenting producing an individual of no specific or fixed identity. The individual is created by the society in which they live and similarly the society in which the individual lives is made up of a collective of individuals. However, when the individuals in the society are no longer working harmoniously together, motivated by different aims or one set of individuals conceives of itself as being superior to another fissures and divisions begin to show. As Hall et al. (1992) point out, identity does not arise from the fullness of the identity which is inside all of us, but rather from the lack of wholeness which can only be filled by those outside of us, from the way in which we imagine ourselves to be seen by others.

In the fashion of the Hegelian³⁸ dialectic the relationship is one of the dominator and dominated informing not only the nature of social interaction, but also the process of identification for both the self and the other. However, contemporary race relations have only resulted in the dominator perpetuating the status quo to maintain not only their superiority, but their identity as well. Conversely, this same situation makes a differing identity for the dominated impossible within the prevailing status quo thus creating the need, among the oppressed, for rebellion as a result of the clash in conflicting needs. Our self-perception is externally determined by the way we are reflected back to ourselves by those around us. Therefore, if one exists in a society where all individuals adhere to a similar value system the way in which they will be reflected back to themselves will be reflective of the mutual recognition. However in a society where one group is oppressed by another the way in which the oppressed group sees itself will largely be negative, because of the way in which they are reflected by their oppressor. Similarly, the oppressor, seeing their reflection through the oppressed is reassured of their superiority and their power is reaffirmed.

The multicultural nature of contemporary societies in which most people live has made the notion of a fixed and culturally specific identity virtually impossible. Instead, people not only absorb aspects of other cultures, but indeed practice only those cultural tenets which best suit their way of life. Very few cultures have remained completely and utterly unaffected by the globalisation process. The impact of the cultural dislocation of the individual is nowhere more

³⁸ In his discussion of Lordship and Bondage Hegel depicts the anomalous and contradictory relationship that exists between the master and the slave. According to Hegel all beings require recognition if they are to attain self consciousness but this can only be realised through mutual recognition. When two individuals encounter each other:

[e]ach is indeed certain of its own self, but not of the other, and therefore its own self-certainty still has no truth. For it would have truth only if its own being-for-self has confronted it as an independent object, or, what is the same thing, if the object has presented itself as this pure self-certainty (Hegel 1977:113).

However, the recognition is only valid if both recognise each other as equals and in the instance of the slave and master this cannot happen because of the unequal power relationship that exists between them. For

according to the Notion of recognition this is possible only when each is for the other what the other is for it, only when each in its own self through its own action, and again through the action of the other, achieves this pure abstraction of being-for-self (Hegel 1977:113).

Charles Taylor (1975: 153) elaborates on this relationship:

Men strive for recognition for only in this way can they achieve integrity. But recognition must be mutual. The being whose recognition of me is going to count for me must be one that I recognize as human. ... My interlocutor sees in me another, but one which is not foreign, which is at one with himself; but this cancelling of my otherness is something I must help to accomplish as well.

The relationship that Hegel describes though not delineated in racial terms exemplifies race relations of dominance and subordination in the colonies. The failure of the races to give mutual recognition does, as Hegel discusses, lead to a state of war, subjugation and an eventual reversal of the status quo.

clearly exemplified than by, not only, the social construction of blackness, but its meaning during the era of apartheid. The very processes of slavery, colonisation and apartheid introduced with them the concept of blackness thus transforming being black from a mere descriptive term to a justification for subjugation and the creating of an underclass that would provide cheap labour for the Western world.

The impact of the creation of blackness and its attendant subjugation leads to a need for the creation of a differing representation and understanding of blackness. It forced black people to produce for themselves, and the rest of the world, a different version of themselves as it were. A (re)projection of blackness in terms that were, not only, positive but determined by black people. It is no longer possible to revert back to a non-racialised social or political existence. Once the concepts of whiteness and blackness were created, indissoluble social norms and irreversible parameters of racial identity were established that will not only restrict, but indeed determine the manner in which we define and understand ourselves as racial beings for generations to come.

The existence of race has led to the establishment of Bantuism which has alternately justified and spoken against the subjugation of black people. The politics of appropriation will always be at play in unequal relationships. Even the best intentioned advocate of group rights runs the risk of undermining the very rights of the group they are advocating for when they assume the role and responsibility of articulating for that group their needs. In juxtaposing literature and politics I explore the racial dynamics at play in South Africa within the historical context in which the literature was written and therefore largely informed not only who was included in the books, but how they are represented. South African white writers have, for generations, attempted to regulate blackness in a volatile political landscape, their efforts however well-intentioned have resulted in the appropriation of the black voice and the construction of a black other consistent with Bantuist ideologies.

Chapter 3 Stereotyping and Ways of Revealing the Other

3.1 The Foundation of Stereotyping and Prejudice

One of the ways in which dominant group ideologies are enhanced in any society is through the construction of stereotypes about the other. The ideological foundations of racial inequality are to be found not only in the process of the construction of race, but also in the perpetuation of stereotypes. Walter Lippmann was the first person to use the term stereotype within the field of social science¹ in his book entitled *Public Opinion* (1922) to describe not only prejudiced and preconceived perceptions of other groups within society, but the influence of culture and society in instilling those preconceived ideas. According to Lippmann we tend to “pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture” (Lippmann 1922: 335). It is his assertion that the stereotypes through which our world is filtered come from “our moral codes and our social philosophies and our political agitations as well” (Lippmann 1922: 345). Lippmann goes on to add that stereotypes are passed on from one generation to the next to such an extent that they assume the validity of established fact. They give a sense of place and order to our world “stereotypes may be the core of our personal tradition, the defences of our position in society” (Lippman 1922: 390).

This last point is of particular interest because it underlies the very foundation of stereotyping and the creation of stereotypes about the other. Stereotypes are commonly the construct of the dominant social group about the other and in establishing negative stereotypes about the intelligence, diligence or morality of the other they secure their own position in society as superior to the other. Changes in stereotypes might lead to changes in the social order and possibly the political order as well resulting in a shift in the power dynamics hence the general resistance proffered changes encounter. Lippmann notes the stereotype is emotionally charged because it is:

¹ Prior to Lippmann’s usage of the term within the field of Social Science it was a term used by the printing industry to refer to a printing plate. According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary a stereotype is “a printing-plate cast from a mould of composed type”.

[a] guarantee of our self-respect; it is the projection upon the world of our own sense of our own value, our position and our own rights. The stereotypes are, therefore, highly charged with the feelings that are attached to them. They are the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defences we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position that we occupy (1922: 394-5).

The centrality of stereotyping the other in the process of our own identity formation enables a clearer understanding of not just how and why stereotypes are formed, but the reasons for their continued existence in human relations. They form a pivotal part of the establishment of hierarchy in the societal power struggle that is a central feature of intergroup relations and the perpetual quest for domination. Gordon Allport (1954/1979) noted that there is a direct connection between categorisation and stereotyping. In the process of ordering and simplifying our world we engage in the process of categorising the things and people in it; however, the groups within these categories, if attributed with certain qualities, can easily become stereotyped. However, Allport is quick to point out that “a stereotype is not identical with a category; it is rather a fixed idea that accompanies the category” (191). Whereas categories have a functional ordering purpose, stereotypes, stemming from these categories, ascribe to the entire group identical qualities, which are then used to define every member of that group.

In their analysis of Allport’s seminal contribution to the psychology of prejudice John T. Jost and David L. Hamilton (2005) define stereotyping as “a belief system in which psychological characteristics are ascribed more or less indiscriminately to the members of a group” (209) and it is this indiscriminate nature of stereotyping that makes it as dangerous, as it is powerful. The individuals that make up the group cease to exist and are then attributed with identical, and in most instances negative, characteristics by virtue of being members of that group. They go on to add that people then use stereotypes to “explain and justify cultural and institutional forms of prejudice in which members of some groups are accepted while others are rejected” (Jost and Hamilton 2005: 209).

Allport’s primary focus was on prejudice and how it is developed within society and then used by the dominant group of the society to advance their own ends while justifying the continued subjugation of minority groups. He saw prejudice as an overtly hostile attitude towards a

person who belongs to a group, simply because he or she belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to that group. According to John A. Dovidio, Peter Glick and Laurie A. Rudman (2005: 5), “Allport acknowledged the functional nature of prejudice and identified both material gain and self-enhancement as basic motivational processes underlying prejudice”.

This assertion is consistent with that of Lippmann’s findings that stereotypes are a pivotal feature of the process by which we not only form our own identity but devise our place in the world in relation to the rest of society. “The overwhelming effect of stereotypes, therefore, is to perpetuate prior beliefs and prejudices; the *status quo* is bolstered through information processors’ reliance upon stereotypes as a convenient way of organizing information about the social world” (Jost and Hamilton 2005: 210). Prejudice and stereotypes are inextricably linked and feed off each other, enabling members of the dominant group to maintain their dominance and justify the oppression of the other. The erasure of the individual is a critical feature of the stereotype and prejudicial behaviour enables acts of oppression to be committed not against individuals, but an amorphous entity that is endowed with negative characteristics that strip them of their individuality and humanity.

3.2 Stereotyping within the South African Youth Literary Context

Despite the significant changes in the socio-political arena in South Africa the writing of youth novels continues to be dominated by white writers and as such the representation and depiction of blackness continues to be largely dictated by these writers. Natasha Distiller and Melissa Steyn (2004: 1) very correctly note that “[t]he power to define is the power to create”, the power dynamic that existed in South Africa prior to 1994 vested the power of defining blackness with the white minority population and so too the power to create blackness in accordance with that definition. Marx and Engels (n.d.) also state that:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.

Bheki Peterson (2006: 165-6) cites Cabral and his assertion that in order for the oppressor to be certain of their conquest it is crucial to destroy all vestiges of the cultural life of the conquered. He also points to Frantz Fanon's assertion that cultural destruction is also an oppressive tool, but in addition to the destruction of the culture of the oppressed, the oppressor proceeds to rewrite and distort the history of the conquered. It is in the destruction of the culture and history of a people that true domination takes place. It then becomes possible to impose a different culture and history to better suit the ends of the oppressor. This assertion is confirmed by Njabulo Ndebele who states that "those who have not domesticated the information gathering process at an intellectual level are doomed to receive information, even about themselves, second hand" (Ndebele as cited by Aubrey Mokadi 2003: 48).

The racial power dynamics that have prevailed within the South African socio-political landscape have influenced and determined the ways blackness is perceived and depicted, and for many decades these portrayals have served to maintain the status quo and justify the repressive systems of colonialism and apartheid. Whilst there have been significant changes in the political landscape it is the contention of this thesis that black stereotypes continue to inform the ways in which black characters are portrayed. Beverley Naidoo (2007: 19) states that "[w]hen black people appeared in such stories², they were usually portrayed as savages³, servants or comic buffoons. While animals were frequently humanised, black people were essentially brutalised". Naidoo maintains that prejudice and discrimination have become a stock feature in the representation of blackness in white writing in South African youth

² The stories that Naidoo is referring to in her article are South African youth novels.

³ Anderson and Perrin (2008: 153-157) discuss the ways in which the concept of the savage has come to be used throughout the history of colonial engagement with the other. They argue that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries savagery was merely considered one of, if not the first, stage of human development towards civilisation. It is their assertion that "just as the notion of 'race', in its kinship with terms like 'tribe' or 'nation' was considered to be a subdivision or a mere variety of the human, so, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the idea of savagery referred only to the *temporary* condition of New World peoples (153) (Emphasis in original). It is the assertion of this thesis that Anderson and Perrin are being disingenuous in their claim that savagery was used to merely refer to a developmental stage in human development. Whilst there might be some veracity to their claim they, however, fail to account for the application of the concept and term savage within the colonial discourse which was fundamental in the process of constructing the other. This depiction enabled the colonialists to not only distinguish themselves from their subjects, but establish their own superiority while at the same time justifying their annexing of the land of the colonised. Their assertion is disputed by Foucault who states that "[t]he savage –noble or otherwise– is the natural man who the jurists and theorists of right dreamed up, the natural man who existed before society existed, *who existed in order to constitute society* (Foucault as cited in Anderson and Perrin 2008: 157) (Emphasis in original).

literature. Whether or not this is deliberate is a moot point, what is significant is the fact of its repeated occurrence.

Although analysing apartheid literature written by black writers Njabulo Ndebele (1991) found that black people in South African novels were presented as symbols, either as maids, thieves, beggars or criminals and not as individuals. “The moralistic ideology of liberalism ... has forced our literature into a tradition of almost mechanistic surface representation” (28), the characters appear as finished products with no history, no story or past. Although this literature was written with the intention of illustrating the evils of apartheid, it ended up being grounded by the “very negation it [sought] to transcend” (23). As mentioned, Ndebele is speaking specifically about the novels by black writers that were being produced during the era of apartheid, but the same argument can be extended to both the apartheid and post-apartheid writings by white authors especially with regard to their black characters who are presented as finished products without a history or context. Most of the black characters found within these texts serve a primarily functional role that is mainly beneficial to the white character. This point is elaborated upon in Chapters 5 and 6 with examples from the novels that are analysed in those chapters.

It is this approach to characterisation, which results in the stereotyping of black characters in these novels. Because their inclusion in the novel is mainly to reflect the horrors of apartheid or to evoke sympathy from the implied white reader there is little effort or emphasis on the development of the character. The evocative function is central to their depiction and therefore predetermines how they will be presented to the reader. I shall cite examples of this in the textual analysis chapters wherein the novels in question will be analysed in detail.

It should be noted that for both black and white writers the implied reader is white and the writing is geared for them. The black writers wanting white readers to understand their fate present the most horrendous of their life’s conditions and the white writers who are similarly inspired present to their white readers black characters that they can empathise with, but more importantly, do so without feeling threatened by them (Ndebele: 1991 and Jenkins: 1993).

Hence you find in most books written by white writers the same stock of black characters being marshalled largely in service of the white characters both literally and figuratively.

Similar to the assertions made by Distiller and Steyn (2004) Magubane (2001) and Michael Wade (1993), Ndebele (1991) states that liberal academic and journalistic institutions in South Africa have contributed significantly to the stereotyped representations of blackness by presenting African society under apartheid as a debased society, drawing attention to all that is negative within African communities. This in turn has informed the ways in which South Africans of other races perceive the black population. Ndebele points out that even those positive aspects of African lives were then presented as a caricature of the white man thus enabling negative perceptions of blackness to be perpetuated even in those instances when it was not warranted but serving merely to undermine black efforts at self-improvement.

The reason behind these stereotypes and negative images of blackness is the nature of the power structures and race relations in South Africa. C. N. Van der Merwe (1994) attempts to historicize and contextualise the advent of black stereotypes by the Afrikaners. Although writing specifically about the Afrikaners the stereotyped views and ideas under discussion in Van der Merwe's paper reflect the attitudes and views about black people shared by a significant number of white people in South Africa who were not necessarily Afrikaners. Van der Merwe suggests that because whites' initial encounters with blacks were either on the battlefield or within the field of work as employees, the stereotypes that emerged centred around those areas of association. Therefore, blacks were either seen as marauding bloodthirsty savages out to kill the white man, or as stupid, lazy thieving children who needed to be told everything twice.

He goes on to suggest that the ways in which white people see black people, especially those images conjured up in times of war are informed largely by the fact that the encounters were violent and fuelled by fear. This does not, however, explain why similar stereotypes did not emerge among the Afrikaners with regard to the English, or vice versa, with whom they were similarly engaged in war. What Van der Merwe overlooks is the fact that it was necessary to create these images of black people to justify their slaughter at the hands of the white settlers

who were determined to exterminate them or subjugate them and it is easier to carry out either of those on a being less human than themselves, as is suggested by Magubane (2001 and 2007).

During the course of history the English and the Afrikaners have had a hostile relationship with war resulting from several clashes yet never at any time are either of them so vilified by the other as blacks. Indeed under apartheid the English enjoyed all the rights and privileges that were reserved for whites only. Van der Merwe is being disingenuous in his suggestion that cultural and religious differences were part of the “misunderstanding” (36) that led to the misperception of black people by their white counterparts. With this assertion Van der Merwe glosses over the deliberate nature of the constructions of black stereotypes through social, academic and religious means, and the fact that these stereotypes served the purpose of not only justifying the treatment of blacks, but also bolstering the image of the superior white in contrast with the inferior black other.

He is more accurate when he points out that whites view blacks in terms of their own self-interest, which explains white perceptions of blacks as being primitive savages or as stupid and lazy. In order for whites to wage brutal wars culminating in subjugation the image of the dangerous black masses waging war against whiteness becomes vital. The process by which the subjugation and abuse of the other is acceptable and justifiable is facilitated by the systematic dehumanising of the other by portraying them as either a threat or indolent incompetent. The literature that is produced under such circumstances will invariably reflect the dominant ideology of the time resulting in a literature that either supports, or denigrates the predominant ideology and/or political system.

The socio-political history of South Africa has created such cleavages within the society that most members of different racial groups have no experience of engaging with members of other groups. Added to this are the roles within society that the group members have played for generations which still inform the ways in which South Africans not only see the other, but how they interact with each other. These stymied interactions as well as images of the other can be clearly seen in the ways in which they portray each other in their writing. Within the

white South African literary circles, the perception of blacks as an underclass continues to haunt their writing as they struggle to create credible black characters that are not based on stereotypes which reflect white constructs of the other.

Inggs (2007) suggests that the end of the 1990s brought about a reduction in the unequal relations between characters of different races, which were a primary feature of South African youth literature reflecting a change in the unequal power relations in society. However, the dominance of the white character was now reflected not in the ways in which the characters were portrayed and interacted, but rather in economic terms, whereby the black characters were always poor, and the whites rich and affluent. It is the contention of this dissertation that although there are some changes the new political dispensation did not usher in as significant a change in the portrayal of black characters as one would have anticipated.

Black characters either continue to be largely poor and marginal and their white counterparts the reverse, for example K. H. Briner's *Cassandra's Quest* (2000), Lauren St. John's *The White Giraffe* (2006) and the sequel *Dolphin Song* (2007). Or, they are indistinguishable from their white counterparts and the reader only knows they are black either because of their name or some other racial identifier within the text. Deracialised characters commonly feature in futurist novels or novels that have science fictional themes such as Jenny Robson's *The Denials of Kow Ten* (1998) and *Savannah 2116 AD* (2004) and Robin Saunders's *Sons of Anubis* (1998). In these novels the characters are not described as black or white, nor are they identified in accordance with their tribe. Race is marked by name and physical description and in some instances not at all. In an effort to reflect the new political dispensation many writers are placing greater emphasis on issues other than race that they considered pertinent to the youth debate and what teenagers are concerned with. However, the result of this process has been a notable shift towards a quasi-homogenisation of South Africa under a white dominant cultural banner. This merging of cultures within South African writing is discussed at length by Leon De Kock (2004).

South African authors, in an effort to (re)construct a youth literature that is informed by non- or multi-racial ideologies that are indicative of the changes within the political dispensation,

have instead created an enabling environment for the cultural “homogenisation and erasure” that is referred to by De Kock (2004: 10). What makes this homogenisation and erasure so much more notable is the fact that it is the minority white English middle class culture that has become the *de facto* representational cultural identity of South Africa. Implied in this assertion is not that other cultures are no longer practised or recognised in South Africa, but rather that other cultures have been relegated to the fringes of the primary culture becoming exoticised curiosities with little more than nostalgic, archival and touristic value. Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz (1996) and Leslie Witz, Ciraj Rassool and Gary Minkley (2001)⁴ discuss the ways in which indigenous cultures have been packaged as tourist attractions through the establishment of cultural villages that are designed to expose indigenous culture to the touristic gaze:

The world of the wild has long beckoned foreigners to visit South Africa; so has the promise of seeing “natives in tribal setting[s]”. But in recent years, a vast new industry has been developed in all corners of the country, as urban and rural communities have sought to present a heritage that has until now been “hidden from view”. Unveiling “old traditions” and “historic sites” for the touristic gaze (Witz, Rassool and Minkley 2001: 278).

These traditional villages are intended to be representations of living cultures where the visitor is invited to not only see, but participate in the traditional life of the various indigenous cultures. The theatricality of the ways in which indigenous cultures are portrayed marks them as touristic and to be distinguished from lived cultures. By locating them within ‘cultural villages’ these cultures are a form of living museum, and reflect only those aspects of the various cultures that have touristic appeal. The facets of these cultures that reflect the ways in which they have changed over time is eliminated giving the impression that what is on display in these living museums is all that remains of the culture which is no longer lived by its people. By extension these anachronistic portrayals suggest that these cultures exist only within the confines of these villages and that the culture that dominates beyond the walls of the villages is the real culture of South Africa that is lived by the entire nation, the white English culture under which other South African cultures have converged.

⁴ These two papers give an interesting overview of South African tourism, looking at aspects of it such as the cultural villages, township tours, Gold Reef City and game parks and how they encourage a specific perception of South Africa, which is a fantasy of the tourist and not the reality of the South Africans especially the black South Africans who are the centrepiece of this construct.

Solomos and Back (1999), Torres, Miron and Inda (1999), and McGillis (1995) all emphasise the fact that culture is the new site of racism, allowing for new politically correct forms of discrimination to replace traditional racism, using terms that serve to conceal the inherent racism in this new ideology. Culture has become the new site of distinction enabling culturally specific discrimination, “[i]n the case of new racism, race is coded as culture” (Solomos and Back 1999: 72 citing Baker 1981).

De Kock (2004: 11-12) is less concerned with the culturalisation of discrimination and instead problematises the homogenisation of South African cultures. He uses the analogy of the seam as a discursive regime to interrogate the process of attempting to fuse the various cultures in South Africa together arguing that the seam demarcates the divisions that exist between the various cultures which are being sutured in order to (re)construct the South African cultural landscape to better reflect the new South Africa, and literature is the instrument with which this seam is sutured. But he reasserts that:

No matter how much fictional composure is imported into the text, much of the writing that sets itself up as *covering* South Africa and its people, in a plural sense, remains marked by various mechanisms of homogenisation and erasure (2004: 9).

He points out that the site of the suture is also the site at which detachments are attempted or made, and this is the point at which strong cultural identities are resurrected or forged. De Kock’s analogy, though emphasising the attempts to create a mono-cultural society in South Africa also reflects on the backlash that generally results from such efforts. Mono-cultural societies cannot exist in a society with a multi-cultural populace as they are predicated on the dominance of one culture at the expense of the other cultures, which results in resistance and strong cultural identity resurgence. Conjoined with this cultural revival is an increase in nationalistic fervour with strong political overtones.

He goes on to add that attempts to homogenise whole nations are based on a warped notion of equality, which declares all cultures to be equal and should therefore have distinction. But in so doing they enhance those differences by promoting one culture above the rest, under whose

shroud other cultures must find a home. De Kock (16) is dismissive of the notion of non-racial societies, finding them to be inherently dichotomous, which invariably implies that there is an us and them, as well as a here, a place of “superstition, backwardness and cultural aridity” and there, a place of “science, invention and discovery”. Powell (1999: 142-143) is equally unconvinced by the assertions of non-racial societies, a position which is based on the argument that since race is not a scientific fact it is therefore an illusion. He goes on to argue that this assertion identifies race and not racism as the problem and it is a position that has been taken up by the right wing to perpetuate the subordination of racial minorities while safeguarding white privilege.

However, Powell finds the multi-racial position equally problematic because of its failure to acknowledge the construction of race as a social and political tool. The political violence in South Africa has been matched by a violence of identity, whereby the depiction and representation of the other has undergone a series of distortions which served to justify the oppression of the other by bringing into question their very humanity (De Kock: 2004). He concludes that because of the cleavages that are part of South African society all literature, whether quotidian or belletrist, will reflect this crisis of dichotomy and representation.

Accepting that indeed mono-cultural societies are neither possible nor desirable and accepting that the cultural and political dominance of white culture in South Africa has resulted in the oppression of black people and a distorted image of blackness being produced within literature, it therefore becomes vital to interrogate the manifestational distortions of blackness. The most readily used and recognised method of representation is stereotyping, which in societies like South Africa that have recently emerged from an extended oppressive history tends to be regarded as accurate factual representations of a whole group of people.

The power of the written word is nowhere more acutely illustrated than in the general acceptance of blackness and the black condition as portrayed in South African literature. As Louise Bethlehem (2004: 94) succinctly puts it “[w]riters and readers collectively assume that literature and life in South Africa maintain a mimetic or one to one relationship, that writing provides a supposedly unmediated access to the real”. Most readers are inclined to absorb and

accept the world that is presented to them within the novel, if the ways in which the characters or facts are portrayed is stereotypical or inaccurate the reader, unknowing or unquestioning, accepts them as true and accurate.

3.3 Stereotypes Past, but Still Present

It is the argument of this thesis that black characters can generally be categorised in accordance with the function they serve in the books in which they appear. However, it is not only their functionality that can be categorised, but the stereotype that they fit into. In this section of the chapter I outline some the more commonly used and encountered stereotypes within South African youth literature. I have tried to list them in order of commonality, not just in fictional writing but in general as well.

3.3.1. Practically one of the Family

The phrase ‘practically one of the family’ is a commonly used expression to refer to servants who have been in the employ of a family for a great number of years. It is a telling phrase because it does not embrace the servant as a member of the family, merely an approximation of one. Within fiction this character is usually old, loyal, well meaning, loving and amusing. The relationship between the servant and the family members, especially the children is presented as one of mutual affection. These characters are typically old, which is a crucial feature as it renders them non-threatening but is also indicative of the length of time that they have worked for the family.

In his paper on the intersection between race and the sexual danger posed by the black male towards white women in early twentieth century South Africa Timothy Keegan (2001) looks at how the increase in the number of white families engaging the services of black males as domestic help created a great deal of alarm within the white community, informing the nature of the treatment and the generally held notions about black servants today:

Domestic arrangements became a source of considerable alarm and public debate at the same time as racial populism was reaching a peak of intensity. It did not take much

to arouse anxiety about the dangers of what many came to regard as an unnatural propinquity between white women and black men (Keegan 2001: 468).

White males were especially anxious about their women being left alone in the house with black males and the potential danger and temptation this posed. These concerns were based on the perception of the black male as sexually bestial, but their anxieties served to further perpetuate these same stereotypes. These fears resulted in increased efforts to force black women into domestic service, and a simultaneous increase in the controls exerted over both black men and white women within the domestic arena. For the white women the controls were the subtle reminders of her role in maintaining the purity of the white race while for the black male it meant stringent emasculating treatment that humiliated him and de-sexualised him.

Keegan's assessment provides a means of analysing the servant stereotype within literature. The process of emasculation is re-enforced within literature through the depiction of old de-sexualised male servants who pose no threat to the family because they are neutered and passive. Although this applies to the male servant primarily, female servants, though not posing a sexual danger, do pose a threat as members of the oppressed underclass. These portrayals of the servant also serve as a representation of the ideal servant within a white household. It is the contention of this dissertation that this depiction is informed by pre-existing anxieties that informed race relation in colonial South Africa right through to the present which is suggested by Keegan's treatises.

The literary representation of this character very rarely alters. They are presented with little substance to them and commonly serve as a prop within the novel to illustrate the extent of the liberalness of the family in question or simply to provide comic relief. Their feelings about their job, their long absence from their own families and in particular their own children are never explored, instead we are given the impression that they are content to be the servant of the white family. Alice in Barbara Ludman's *Day of the Kugel* (1989), and Tom in Toeckey Jones' *Go Well Stay Well* (1979) are both classic examples of the one of the family stereotype. They are both older, well-meaning and have no depth of emotion whatsoever. Alice is plump, cheerful and loved by the family, an emotion she appears to reciprocate. She fits a stereotype

that was first used in American antebellum discourse to refer to a black female slave working in the plantation house.

These constructionist processes were re-enforced in the literary discourses that portrayed black adults as “boys” and “girls” predestined to work in servitude to the white populace. And whilst the terminology has changed over time, the portrayal of the servant has not; consider for example Joseph in Barrie Hough’s *Dream Chariot* (1993). Although Joseph is not employed by the Van Zyl family he describes himself as the “boss boy” (43) of the flats and his character largely reflects that description. His character is similar in function and role to Johannes in Paul Geraghty’s *Pig* (1988) who also does not work directly for the family but is a groundsman at the school attended by Michael, the main protagonist. He is referred to as the “boy” (111) by the students in the school and like Joseph plays a quasi-paternal role in the life of the young white boys who have both lost their fathers. Other examples of the stereotyped servant who is devoted to the white family include Thandi in K. H. Briner’s *Cassandra’s Quest* (2000) and Mietje in John Coetzee’s *The Message* (1990).

Alice in *Day of the Kugel* features more prominently within the novel than most other servant characters, but her presence is as functional as the role she plays within the family. She is there to provide Michelle with educational and informative interludes. Through her and her daughter Michelle is able to garner information about South Africa, the poor educational system that is provided for black children, the living conditions in Soweto and the repressive laws under which black people exist. The representations of her emotions and general information about her life notwithstanding, Alice, like most other black servant characters, is merely a prop in the larger drama. And similar to other black characters her function is to inform the reader about the black condition while at the same time enabling a depiction of the white family as non-racist liberals through the way in which they treat their servant.

Tom in *Go Well Stay Well* is the male equivalent of Alice, neutered, passive and devoted to the family especially Candy, and like Alice his role is purely functional and serves to foreground Candy as a racially tolerant liberal white girl. The relationship between Tom and Candy is presented as one of genuine affection but it is a stereotypical black servant/white

child relationship where the age difference between the two is indiscernible because they are presented as being intellectually and emotionally on par. The differences in their respective situations is unacknowledged and treated as though it were a minor hindrance in their relationship and not an inhibiting factor to their engagement. These characters are functional at best and provide a little colour to the text, they are not given an opportunity to vocalise any kind of opinion, thought or emotion, as though their lives as servants were the sum of their existence.

3.3.2. Not Like Other Blacks

The established stereotypes of blackness have become such an accepted facet of white perceptions and expectations of blackness that when they encounter a black person that does not fit the stereotype they conclude that they are not like other blacks. This perception is premised on the tacit acceptance of existing stereotypes of blacks thus making exceptions those blacks that display characteristics that are inconsistent with the stereotyped image. Although not a common feature in youth literature they are significant in that they are symptomatic of a social malaise that ascribes negative qualities to an entire group of people and identifies a handful considered an exception to the norm. The main function of this type of black character is to illustrate to the white reader the very exceptionality that is possible among blacks; however in making one black person exceptional it re-enforces the stereotypes still considered applicable to the remainder of the group. Stephens (1992: 51-2) in his discussion on ways to counter stereotypes, which is looked at in more detail later, suggests focalising the novel through a minority culture so that members of these cultures are seen as ordinary people and refrain from the usual practice of focusing on the exceptional members of the group.

What is most distinguishing about these characters is the fact that they tend to be portrayed with characteristics that are usually the reverse of white characters to illustrate their exceptionality. But it is not having these qualities that makes them exceptional but rather the repeated belaboured references to them by the author to emphasise them that does so. They are educated, or witty and clever like Joe in *Day of the Kugel* by Barbara Ludman (1989),

Becky in *Go Well Stay Well* by Toeckey Jones (1979), Solomon in *Homeward Bound* by Lawrence Bransby (1980), Thule Nene in Shirley Bojé's (1992) *Cry Softly Thule Nene* and James in *Into the Valley* (1990) by Michael Williams, qualities that are usually the reserve of white characters thus making these black characters exceptional. Dyer (1997: 63) notes that in most fictional representations "a white person who is bad is failing to be "white", whereas a black person who is good is a surprise, and one who is bad merely fulfils expectations". Not only are their characteristics singular, their very development and construction as characters illustrates their difference, they are endowed with histories, emotions and ideas, they are overall fuller characters than many of their black counterparts. Even though they are not necessarily the focaliser of the narrative we are still given considerably more information about them emotionally and otherwise than we are about other black characters.

In addition to this, their engagement with other black characters, if any, emphasises their difference, because the other black characters are generally portrayed in common stereotypes, which serve to enhance their exceptionality. For example, Joe's (*Day of the Kugel*) engagement with Beauty is one of condescension and dismissiveness, admonishing her use of her native language and mocking her fears of white people. Similarly, James (*Into the Valley*) uses othering discourses in his discussions and references to other black people in the valley whom he regards with patronising contempt lamenting their backwardness and unwillingness to heed his sound advice on nutrition and basic finance. Thule's (*Cry Softly Thule Nene*) interactions with other black characters, though nothing like those of Joe and James', show Thule to be level headed, generous, industrious and kind, which are her markers of distinction, whereas the other children in the orphanage are the opposite of Thule. Solomon is the only black character we encounter in *Homeward Bound* but he is distinguished from the bloody thirsty mob that are only mentioned with regard to the fact that they are burning property and necklacing people in the townships.

What this kind of portrayal does is to reaffirm the stereotypes of black people by constructing a subset of the other, who while remaining the other, is elevated to a higher stratum of the other group. By virtue of this logic the remaining members of the group continue to be perceived as exhibiting qualities that are consistent with the stereotyped portrayals. The

exceptional black represents a small subset that has somehow managed to escape the impediments of their blackness and its attendant disadvantages. This type of character is easy for the white characters and the implied white reader to relate to and interact with and therefore lay the foundation for a friendship.

They are the representational conveyance of a distinguished minority black subset, but they are also the means by which white anxieties are quelled. This construction of a superior subset of the other is reminiscent of colonialist discourses that placed the natives that they encountered in Southern Africa in an evolutionary hierarchy. Dubow (1995: 66) points out that although all natives were considered inferior to the white other, “Bantu speakers were mostly considered markedly superior to the ‘Bush’ races”. Pieterse (1992) made a similar assertion, noting that this process of distributing the other into subsets of worth was not peculiar to politics but was reinforced by early anthropologists. An even more fascinating point of this depiction is that even the maligned other was placed on a hierarchy and within Southern Africa the Bantu warrior nations, especially the Zulus, were held in far greater esteem than their more passive counterparts the San.

Through these exceptional blacks the author is able to not only voice the black perspective through an articulate, educated, though less revolutionary voice⁵, but is also able to give the white readers an opportunity to see a different type of black person who could easily be their friend, colleague, neighbour or classmate, thus allaying their fears and concerns. It lays the foundation for the assimilation and acceptance of a few blacks into white society with the potential for their being regarded as equal.

Solomon in *Homeward Bound* is an example of a conveyance for the articulation of the black perspective, which informs and educates whites about black realities without being threatening. Solomon is differently constructed and afforded far greater focus than most other black characters. He has a measure of rebellious substance and a tangible history accompanied by credible vocalisations on issues of race and discrimination. His relationship with Jason,

⁵ Becky becomes progressively more militant but her militancy is primarily functional and serves to educate Candy about aspects of black life that she is clearly unfamiliar with. But her militancy is curbed by the author before it starts to threaten Candy and the white reader.

however, is an especially weak facet of the novel because having established Solomon as a strong individual the author undermines his narrative function by subverting his character to mere functionality. He enables Jason to re-evaluate his narrow minded prejudicial attitudes towards both black people and Afrikaners, which allows Jason to transform, re-emerging as a better person better equipped to contend with his own personal issues. But, as is usually the case in the portrayal of these relationships there is absolutely no benefit to Solomon in any way. He is not even given a sense of understanding what the reason for white prejudice towards blacks is.

Similarly, Joe in *Day of the Kugel* (Barbara Ludman: 1989) educates Michelle about apartheid, which in turn enables her to overcome her personal and familial challenges that cause her move to South Africa from America to live with her aunt and uncle. Becky in *Go Well Stay Well* (Toeckey Jones: 1979) also serves an educative function very much like Joe. She educates Candy about apartheid and provides Candy with the emotional and intellectual fodder with which to mature and expand her political horizons. Nkululeko and Chester in *The Red Haired Khumalo* (Elana Bregin: 1989) are the catalysts for Chelsea's attitudinal change and transformation from being an intolerant racist to becoming friends with her black stepbrother, thus a better person. Sam in *The Kayaboeties* (Elana Bregin: 1989) helps Pecker to transform, bringing about a change in his racial attitudes. However, none of the black characters experience similar transformations as a result of their association with the white characters, nor are they given the benefit of an explanation or justification for white racism.

Although the exceptional black character is differently portrayed from other black characters, their role in the novel continues to be primarily functional because once they have served their function within the novel they are dispensed with. Solomon exits the book by being transferred to another school, his parents having received numerous threats for being sell outs because they sent their child to a private school, although how sending him to another white school resolves the problem is not explained. But with little resolved where he is concerned and having benefited nothing from his association with Jason he is removed from the main narrative.

Joe and Becky suffer a similar fate once their role in the white character's life is fulfilled. Joe, having educated Michelle on apartheid and life in South Africa is ignobly removed and for his active participation in the Soweto uprising is further punished with incarceration while Stephen his white comrade makes a lucky escape into exile. Although Becky is removed from the narrative she does return because she is still vital to Candy's completion of her journey to self-actualisation. Like Solomon, neither Becky nor Joe derive any real or tangible benefits from their close association with the white characters in whose lives they have been instrumental with regard to personal growth and development.

The exceptional black character contributes greatly to the development of the white character and provides the white readership with a black character that they can relate to and possibly even consider befriending. But this relationship is of little benefit to the black character or any of the other black characters whose portrayal and perception is not changed by the existence of the exceptional black.

3.3.3. The Primitive Superstitious Black

In much of South African literature traditional beliefs and practices are commonly portrayed as primitive, backward, superstitious and dangerous. This perception originated with the white missionaries' first encounter with black people and their efforts to convert Africans to Christianity. Traditional religion, medicine and other practices were reviled as barbaric and mired in the dark arts. In his discussion of early Christian encounters with Africans K. Asare Opoku (1990: 222) points out that:

The missionaries, however, had a negative attitude towards African religion and culture and were determined right from the start to stamp them out. The missionaries preached against and condemned all kinds of traditional beliefs and practices, and also denied the existence of gods and witches and other supernatural powers which Africans believed in.

Peter Kasenene (1993: 129-139) concurs with this assertion reiterating the fact that early Christians regarded Africans and their practices and beliefs as "submerged in vice" (130). These early Christian perceptions continue to inform the ways in which traditional beliefs and

practices are perceived by Western and African Christians alike. Elizabeth Colson (2006) and Kasenene (1993) both point out that despite the widespread acceptance of Christianity among Africans there continues to be a significant number who adhere to both Christianity and traditional practices though practising them separately. Asare Opoku (1990) notes that, especially in the early encounters with Christianity, a form of integrated Christianity was established by African Christians incorporating African traditional beliefs and practices into their Christian services in what he terms “Indigenous Christianity” (225).

Traditional beliefs and practices have been conflated with witchcraft and evil and are thus portrayed in a number of literary undertakings resulting in a generalised depiction of the traditional art of divination and healing as synonymous with the practice of the dark arts. Peter Pels (1998: 193) argues that western images of Africa as “the dark heartland of magic and witchcraft” are informed by a fear of African occults”, resulting in a (re)definition of what originally was regarded as African fetishism to “witchcraft as interpreted along English lines” (201). He adds that “Western images of Africa as a dark and occult continent functioned, ... as a way to contain African phenomena within the parameters of imperial, colonial, and neo-colonial power and ideology” (194). He goes on to analyse early African adventure novels by H. Rider Haggard, Joseph Conrad, and John Buchan among others arguing that they contributed significantly to, not only the demonising of African practices as witchcraft, but also the fear that accompanies this (re)interpretation.

Wade (1993) contends that the contrast between western civilisation and primitive, superstitious Africa are a key feature in many books written by white writers who present an image of Africa as not only primitive but unable to survive outside of white intervention. Primacy is given to western civilisation including its medical practices and religious beliefs, while things African are seen as backward, dark and downright dangerous. Similarly Vivian Yenika-Agbaw (2008) found that Africa continues to be presented as primitive and barbaric which serves to reinforce Western perceptions of not only, the superstitious and therefore backward other, but the superiority of their belief structure.

Portrayals of traditional beliefs and practices in South African literature reflect the extent to which Christian perceptual discourses inform the framing of these practices within current literary presentations of them. Donnarae MacCann and Yulisa A. Maddy (2001: 38) found that African customs and beliefs are portrayed as elements of primitive backward thinking that leave the ignorant masses mired in superstition and fear which lead them either to acts of brutality or passive acceptance of themselves being brutalised.

They go on to add that African cultural practices and belief systems tend to be presented as backward and primitive, making the adherents thereof unfit to participate in the modern world of European dominated cultures and norms. As a result of the ways in which these cultures are portrayed those who practise these cultures are therefore deemed unfit for anything but a life of oppression and servitude because of their failure to enter the modern era (MacCann and Maddy 2001: 89). Another facet of many of these books is the fact that African cultural practices are often portrayed as homogeneous and indistinguishable. There is no attempt to distinguish between the various cultural practices that exist among the different cultural groups. Blacks are shown as having the same somewhat sinister cultural practices that border on the savage and barbaric. In these representations there are no details of the practice, its purpose or meaning, what is inferred, however, is that it is primitive, ominous and benighted, invariably conducted in dark places and performed by terrifying forbidding individuals usually with ill intent or simply misguided.

Some examples of the variously negative representations of African traditional practices as witchcraft and superstition can be found in the following novels: Anne and Peter Cook's *The Mystery of the Wooden Stool* (1978) where Munyama a powerful witch-doctor is revealed to be a murderer and a thief. The fact that he uses his powers as a witch doctor for his criminal activities and to terrorise other characters in the novel, immobilising them with in a superstitious grip directly associates traditional healers with corruption and criminality. In *Shadow of the Wild Hare* (1986) Marguerite Poland attempts to present Tanti Mayekiso, the diviner and trapper, with a measure of sympathy but her efforts are undermined by portraying him as a terrifying image for the main protagonist Rosie and by presenting him as trapping

little hares for food and *muti*⁶. In Elana Bregin's *The Slayer of Shadows* (1996) the township residence are paralysed with fear of witchcraft and magic, which Zak is thought to have. Witchcraft is also used by the residents of the township as a motive for perpetrating barbarically violent acts against each other.

In Jenny Robson's *Where Shadows Fall* (1996) witchcraft is used for the purposes of love but the way in which it is used is self-serving and macabre. Lesedi uses witchcraft to switch bodies with her prettier cousin Boineelo without her cousin's knowledge so she can win the heart of the man she loves. Mmalefifi, the witch doctor whose name means mother of darkness is an old woman who mixes the potions and is a social outcast living alone in a dark cave far from the rest of the community that fears her but also reveres her power. Chrystal Pickard's *The Altar of Aberdare* (2006) frames the struggle for independence within the discourse of witchcraft. Julia the witch doctor's desire for independence for his people is portrayed as the evil work of a power hungry witch doctor driven by a thirst for power and land. The struggle for independence is discredited and thwarted by the association with witchcraft and its use for personal gain and the destruction of others.

It is, however, important to acknowledge that there have also been changes in the way that traditional medicine and practices are presented in literature, with more positive depictions thereof being found in several texts. In Hettie Jones' *Forever Young Forever Free* (1976) Rakwaba the village healer and diviner is highly regarded by all the characters both black and white, with the exception of Sister Theresa who represents unyielding white Christian notions of what traditional healers represent. Anna and Uncle Tim in Shelley Davidow's *Spirit of the Mountain* (1996), black and white respectively, grow and use traditional medicine and the sangoma uses his medicine and divination as a means to help people. He is portrayed as wise by the author and respected by all the other characters with the exception of Emily's mother who regards Anna with suspicion and dismisses the sangoma and people who believe in traditional practices as "barbarians" (106). Emily's mother, like Sister Theresa, represents

⁶ *Muti* literary means medicine but in current usage it is commonly used in reference to traditional medicine that is made using various plants and herbs. However, once animal parts are introduced to the medicine there is implied therein an element of the sinister and dark arts.

white notions of what a sangoma is and does. Finally in Lauren St. John's *The White Giraffe* (2006) Grace also uses her power in order to benefit others and to assist Martine realise her destiny. Her role as a diviner and her traditional medicine and practices are not presented as strange and terrifying and they are validated through the other characters especially Martine. However, these are part of the exception, and although the changes in the socio-political landscape are increasingly influencing the depiction of African traditions, in a country where Christianity is the dominant religion the perception of African traditions remains negative, and the stereotyped image of the inherent evil of traditional practices continues to dominate.

3.3.4. Black Sexuality

It is not customary to find sexuality or romance featured in South African youth literature. Relationships that involve any kind of sexual interaction are seldom depicted. Inggs (2009: 101) notes that sexual relationships are not commonly depicted in South African youth literature and in those instances when they are it is usually in a didactic fashion serving as warning against sexual activity for example *Blue Train to the Moon* (Dianne Hofmeyr 1993) and *Skin Deep* (Toeckey Jones 1985). Unusual as sexual portrayals are, black sexual relationships are an even more uncommon feature in youth fiction. Literary references to black sexuality tend to portray it as aberrant in some way, it tends to be depicted as either excessive, threatening or absent. Sander Gilman (1985: 209) states that "by the eighteenth century, the sexuality of the black, male and female, becomes an icon for deviant sexuality in general". Gilman goes on further to suggest that "one of the black servant's central functions in the visual arts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was to sexualise the society in which he or she was found". hooks adds that this black "presence ... allowed whites to sexualize their world by projecting onto black bodies a narrative of sexualisation dissociated from whiteness" (1992: 62) in order to do that it was necessary to depict the sexuality of the other as perverse and thus making its public display acceptable⁷.

⁷ These assertions are lent credence by academic studies of black sexuality that draw conclusions that affirm these stereotypes. For example in the study of black male and female sexuality, which was compared and contrasted with white sexuality Weinberg and Williams (1988) concluded the following: that blacks are more sexually experienced from a younger age, with more sexual partners and a higher disposition for extra marital affairs. Their attitudes towards sex are more liberal and permissive thus enabling them to be more sexually free.

Black Female Sexuality

Black female sexuality has long been mythologised and stereotyped in literature, with black females being depicted as licentious, what Jennifer Bailey Woodard and Teresa Mastin (2005: 272) refer to as the “sexual siren, which represents negative portrayals of Black women as ... [a] sexually aggressive, uncaring Jezebel”. hooks (1992) adds that the black female body was considered expendable and was therefore used and viewed in a detached manner that denied the humanity of the black female. At the same time Keegan (2001: 468) asserts that in the early colonial history of South Africa black women were considered:

Moral contaminants, whose untamed sexuality contrasted radically with white women. At one level, the opprobrium directed at unattached black women served to make them the perpetrators rather than the victims of licentiousness and shifted attention away from white men as sexual aggressors. At another level, these lustful black woman became a repository for white male fantasies.

Woodard and Mastin (2005), Keegan (2001), hooks (1992), Martin S. Weinberg and Colin J. Williams (1988) all point out that this imaging of black female sexuality was a mechanism used in large to justify and excuse the sexual exploitation and abuse of black women by dehumanising them and making them culpable for their own abuse. In her article on the prevalence of rape in South Africa Helen Moffet (2006: 131) notes that:

The pernicious and overtly racially ranked hierarchies endorsed and enforced during South Africa’s apartheid regime continue to have profound implications for women and their experience of gender-based and sexual violence, even after the forms of social stratification are apparently dismantled or transformed in line with rights-based principles.

In this paper she also discusses the transfer of responsibility by the rapist onto the victim citing a televised interview with a taxi driver who confessed that he and his friends looked for women to gang rape. He qualified the statement by declaring that, “these women, they force us to rape them ... [but only] the cheeky ones - the ones that walk around like they own the place, and look you in the eye” (Moffet 2006: 138). The responsibility for rape is thus deflected onto the victim whose actions have provoked the rape; the perpetrator absolves himself of all blame evoking the age old argument that “she asked for it”.

Keegan (2001: 468) gives an excellent illustration of the prevailing attitudes towards black women in early twentieth century South Africa which reveal the perception and value attached to black women which made them vulnerable to sexual abuse. Keegan analyses the *Commission into Assaults on Women* which was established in 1913, and one of the pronouncements arrived at by Melius de Villiers, the commission's chairman and former Chief Justice, in his minority report was that the race of the victim of sexual assault was a determining fact in deciding the severity of the crime. According to Keenan, de Villiers contended that:

white men did not pose a particular danger to black women and, in any case, black men, being of an inferior race, did not prize the honour of their women folk all that highly. ... African men's objections to intercourse between white men and black women was due solely to their not receiving payment from the white man for their daughter's services (468).

De Villiers' statement reveals not only white male attitudes towards black women, but is also reflective of the value placed on white women and in juxtaposing them with the black female of the white male imaginary the white woman can only exude purity and innocence.

There are only two novels that were analysed for this thesis that portray black sexuality. One is Toeckey Jones' *Go Well Stay Well* (1979), which reflect all three forms of stereotypes about black sexuality: permissive black female sexuality and the two stereotypes of black male sexuality, the one being of the emasculated de-sexualised black male and the other the sexually aggressive and threatening black male. The other novel that depicts black sexuality is Elana Bregin's *The Red Haired Khumalo* (1994). The sexualisation of Becky in *Go Well Stay Well* is an illustration of Gilman's (1985) point about the use of the black body to sexualise the white world. Although it is Candy, the white character that is solicited by the black boys, it is Becky, the black character, who is sexualised. Additionally the preservation of Candy's dignity and value as a white female is maintained by filtering the solicitation through Becky such that by the time it reaches Candy it is sanitised by the filtration and translation.

The authorial voice is clearly audible in Candy's reaction to being found attractive by black males. She is shocked at the very suggestion of interracial sexual engagement, something she

knows is illegal and regarded as an immoral act and a sin. Candy's virtue as a white female who shuns sexual advances from black males is secured by her reaction. As Keegan (2001: 475) points out

[i]t was unthinkable that respectable [white] women could ever consent to black men being familiar with them. It was essential for the white self-image that black men be seen as bestial villains, and respectable white women as innocent victims.

Candy's allusion to the Immorality Act (1950) (Repealed by the Sexual Offences Act (1957) and the assumed sinfulness of engaging sexually with black males reflects the extent of Candy's innocence in this encounter, she has obviously done nothing to encourage such solicitation and her response affirms that:

Candy couldn't help feeling shocked. Black men were not supposed to *look* at white women like that. The law forbade sexual relations across the Colour Bar, and such unions were not only illegal, there were also commonly considered to be indecent, if not an actual religious sin. The possibility of any sort of relationship developing between herself and a black boy had therefore never occurred to Candy. Nor had she ever, *even briefly*, wondered whether she found black men attractive (20) (*emphasis added*).

However, Candy's reaction is clearly not emphatic enough to reflect her innocence and horror, in order for it to be complete she displays the requisite fear of being raped by black men as she recalls that "[b]lack men did sometimes rape white women, and were hanged for it if they were caught (20)". According to Keegan (2001) a correspondent with *The Friend* (May 15 1912) wrote that the reason black men who raped white women were sentenced to death, unlike white rapists of black or white women who only got prison sentences was because of:

the insult which a black man, a member of a subject race, has put upon a white woman, one of the dominant race. It is therefore in revenge for this insult that the difference in degree between the punishments meted out to white and black offenders is demanded. The crime itself is ranked as ordinarily criminal - the attendant insult is a capital offence (as cited in Keegan 2001: 473).

With this thought Candy's innocence is concretised and the author engages in the process of deflecting Candy's sexuality by transferring all sexual culpability onto Becky. Consistent with stereotypes of the black female's sexuality as a vital defining characteristic, regarded as

always sexually permissive, available and fecund, the author implies this about Becky thus deflecting the sexuality away from Candy. The reader is told that Becky “certainly gave the impression that she had had *lots* of experience with boys” (21) (*own emphasis*). This observation is based entirely on Becky’s contemptuous tone in responding to the boys. The seed is then planted in the mind of the reader that Becky has a great deal of sexual experience, which in turn implies a degree of permissiveness on her part. The reader is of course left wondering how it is that Candy draws this conclusion after such a short encounter with Becky in which she has revealed nothing of herself to bear out Candy’s conclusion.

Becky’s sexuality is externalised, she is never at any point the agent of her own sexuality when it is made reference to. She does not act sexually but in all instances her sexuality is discussed either by the other characters in the novel or by the writer. Firstly, Candy assumes her greatly experienced with boys, she is then raped, and later we learn that Colin, Candy’s brother, finds her attractive. In every situation Becky is objectified sexually and she is completely denied any control of her own sexuality. She is never given an opportunity to own her sexuality, quite unlike Becky’s cousin Lillian who takes ownership of her sexuality, which empowers her and gives her agency, and complete control over her sexual being.

Becky’s body is used by the author as a means of advancing aspects of the story but as Beth Younger (2003: 47) asserts this results in “characters (and readers) internalis[ing] the gaze that re-enforces female objectification, and these social constructions of young women’s bodies become accepted norms...” The recalled scene in which Candy remembers her brother Colin looking at an erotic picture of a black woman is a further objectification of the black female form sexualising the world of the novel. What is noteworthy about Candy’s reaction to the notion of her brother being attracted to black females is the fact that she is neither shocked nor surprised. Indeed the author affirms the stereotyped notions of black sexuality by making it aberrant for black males to ogle white females but acceptable for white males to do likewise with black women.

Black Male Sexuality

The two prevailing stereotypes about black male sexuality are the portrayal of them as either sexually void or aggressive. The sexually passive stereotype is not as dominant as the aggressive stereotype and generally functions within specific areas of engagement. It is important to note that these stereotypes of black male sexuality apply to their sexuality relative to white women. Keegan's (2001) discussion of the sexual anxieties of the white male with regard to the white woman and the black male servant provides an insight into how both stereotyped perceptions gained ascendancy within white society.

Based on Keegan's treatise it is possible to determine how the colonial discourse of domination was enhanced by the utilisation of these stereotypes, with the stereotype of sexual aggression being used to subjugate the black male thus circumventing the danger he posed, while the passive stereotype, which equally dehumanised him, served to enable that oppression. The stereotype of the sexually passive black male is usually used in reference to black male domestic workers who were thus portrayed as part of the process for ensuring that "the [black male] servants ... [were] kept in their place" (Keegan 2001: 469). This stereotype enabled white women to retain black male servants as there was a limited number of black females available for domestic service.

In *Go Well Stay Well* Candy notes that she has never encountered any black men who are not servants and their status has emasculated them in her eyes and as such she does not consider them to be sexual beings. Tom represents the neutered male servant who has no spouse, partner nor lover that we are aware of and this perception of him is affirmed by Candy's observation that "[t]he only black men she had come across were servants in white households, and their servility had stamped them with an almost sexless identity in her mind" (20). Tom is the ideal desexualised non-threatening black male; he is old, compliant and a servant emasculated not only by the way in which he is seen by the white characters, but also because he is performing what are generally regarded as feminine tasks, such as cooking, cleaning and doing the laundry. Unlike the young men in the park there is no sexual threat from Tom, indeed Tom has no sexual existence, he is the diametric opposite of the solicitous

young men of Candy's encounter. The young men who rape Becky are at the other end of the spectrum representing the realisation of all that white women have to fear from black men.

The contrasting stereotype of the passive black male is of the sexually aggressive black male which is a far more common stereotype. Incensed by the continual depiction of the black male as sexually predatory, Edward Rhymes (2004: Para 5) states that as black men they are portrayed as "oversexed or lascivious, ... accused of being rampant, sexual beasts, unable to control our urges, unable to keep our legs crossed, unable to keep it in our pants".

However it is not the abstract threat of the "savage, bestial other" (Keegan 2001: 469) that is the dominant concern, but rather the threat that he poses to white women. According to Keegan "[i]n white imaginations, respectable white women were bound to become the sacrificial prey of the black beast unleashed by the breaching of racial boundaries" (464). It is because of these, arguably intentional, misperceptions that panic and fear of the other is fomented. Keegan asserts that it is within this kind of atmosphere that the fear of the 'black peril' reached its apex:

Black peril came to stand for a dense array of ill-defined fears and fantasies of racial contagion and invasion. The black peril, however, was largely a fantasy, which conflated presumed intentions, imagined remarks and chance encounters into wild and unsubstantiated charges of attempted rape (471).

There is an element of the fantastical in the incident between Candy and the black boys in the park. Candy's response is out of proportion with what is portrayed as a passing comment. We are told that Candy "remembered the challenging arrogance in the youth's eyes as he looked at her. She felt slightly menaced by it, and briefly afraid of him" (20). This observation enables Jones to harness the black male stereotype and use it to accentuate Candy's reaction, her response of anxiety is the appropriate reaction for any white woman of moral standing when solicited by black males. I would however suggest that it is his daring to even think of a white woman sexually that renders him arrogant and the only reason for Candy to feel this way is because he is black and not because he poses any real threat to her.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to look in any detail at the representations of black male sexuality. However, it bears mention that the literary depiction of black men is seldom favourable especially with regard to their sexuality in relation to white women. Couched in Bantuist historical discourses that are founded in coloniality, black male sexuality tends to be either neutered or demonised, devoid of any complexity or emotion. Candy's sense of fear is a little incongruous in relation to her subsequent wondering if she is indeed sexy after the encounter in the park, which belies the suggestion of her feeling threatened.

Wade (1993) observes that black male characters tend to be presented in defence stereotypes as a way to not only dehumanise them, but also as a way to contend with the threat that their physicality poses. He adds that the mythologised black sexuality, especially that of the male, combined with their strength, has greatly contributed to the perpetuation of the stereotypes of them as desexualised servants and buffoons. The motivation behind these defence stereotypes is the anxieties among the white populace, but Keegan (2001) points out that they centre on the proximity of the races and the potential threat the black male poses to the white female. Black male sexuality, as Wade contends, tends to be erased altogether, but in those instances when it is alluded to it is portrayed as dangerous and uncontrolled posing a particular threat to white women who would appear to be the preferred sexual target of black male sexuality.

The purported black male preoccupation with white women is illustrated in Elana Bregin's *The Red Haired Khumalo* (1994) through the character of Rambo who takes Chelsea out on a date. Rambo is presented to the reader as cunning, and his attentions to Chelsea, especially because they are sexual, serve to emphasise that cunning. The author describes Rambo approaching Chelsea to ask her out on a date in terms that make it clear that he is indeed a predator: "A shadow detached itself from the tree shadows and came slouching towards her. Dismayed, she recognised Rambo's predatory gait" (75). While he is talking to Chelsea one of the other boys warns her about him and Rambo laughs, "[h]e laughed showing teeth like a wolf. The sleepy eyes did not catch the laughter, however. They continued their inspection of Chelsea. There was a disturbing slyness to them, as if Rambo was constantly plotting things" (43). It is made clear from the start that his interest in Chelsea stems in large part from the fact that she is a white girl. He tells Chelsea that she has "such nice white skin. And your hair - I

like this also” (43). Rambo’s predatory pursuit of Chelsea perpetuates the stereotype of black males as being sexually aggressive and in continual pursuit of white women especially.

The Commission into Assaults on Women of 1913 that is referenced by Keegan (2001: 465) reported that:

Foreign professional prostitutes allowed, and indeed invited, intercourse between themselves and natives. Amongst their companions such natives gloried in the fact of having had intercourse with white women, and on their return home the fact was repeated and spread abroad. So desire was stimulated in minds previously innocent of such an idea, and individuals unable to discriminate between one class of women and another were inclined to gauge the standard of morality of white women by the example presented under such circumstances, and to fancy that they need only make advances to be accepted by white women generally.

This notion that black men’s primary desire is for white women and that the engagement with a white woman is a bragging point is affirmed in *The Red Haired Khumalo*. Despite the fact that Chelsea is uncomfortable with Rambo and does not like him at all she agrees to go on a date with him. On arriving for the date she finds him sitting with a group of friends whom he has brought to prove to them that he is indeed going on a date with a white woman. He explains their presences by declaring that “these boys did not believe I was going out with a white *intombi* tonight. They thought I was making up stories to impress them” (81). Rambo’s statement is consistent with the assertions made in the commission’s report about black men bragging about being with white women.

In portraying this scene Bregin is reinforcing not only the stereotype of black men’s desire for white women, but she is also instilling the notion of the white woman as currency for the black man. The white woman therefore becomes valued by virtue of her being white and is portrayed as a prized object for the black man, which naturally leads the reader to wonder what this implies about Chester and his marriage to Beth, a white woman. For implied in this portrayal of interracial sexual engagements is the suggestion that the status of a black man is increased in the eyes of other black men when he is with a white woman. Bregin, like Jones, therefore fails to transcend the stereotyped portrayals of black male sexuality and its relation to white women.

3.3.5. Black Political Awareness

The struggle for independence in South Africa has always been a complex obstacle course for white South African writers to negotiate. Whilst many liberal whites in South Africa acknowledged the brutality of apartheid, many of them harboured misgivings about black majority rule. At the root of this consternation was the unacknowledged fear that black majority rule would usher in, at best, the end of white privilege, and at worst reverse apartheid. It is possible that these misgivings were also based on the presumed inability of blacks to competently run the country. The tendency therefore was to portray blacks as politically incompetent or unaware and in so doing perpetuated the notion that blacks were incapable of ruling the country. MacCann and Maddy (2001) point out that a significant number of South African youth novels present blacks as “incapable of positive action and therefore a hindrance to democratic reforms” (25).

This perception of black political ineptitude is juxtaposed with the portrayal of white characters, who are depicted as generous, noble, brave and kind, going out of their way to help blacks in the struggle through various means, such as marching, paying fees, smuggling people and arms across borders. The white participation and contribution to the struggle is presented as being so critical to the realisation of independence that it completely overshadows black participation. The blacks are then presented as grateful underlings to the white characters, thus reinforcing the stereotype of blacks as being incapable of looking after themselves and being forever in need of white wisdom and guidance and therefore clearly not ready to rule (MacCann and Maddy 2001: 33-4).

It is not common to have politicians as characters in youth novels, but there are significant references to politics and black political involvement and awareness. However, black political action is commonly portrayed as an amalgamation of violence and diminished capability and awareness. Blacks are depicted as having little or no understanding of the political situation, especially the violence that took place in the townships and villages. Portrayals and references to the pre-election violence both in the media and the novels that reference it tend to be

racialised, emphasising the fact that this was violence against black people by other black people.

However, Vincent Maphai (1993) counters these depictions by pointing out that the state and right wing elements within South Africa were also involved in the escalation of violence in the early 1990s. He also contends that this was in part due to the clandestine efforts by the right wing to derail the negotiations that were taking place to establish a democratic South Africa. With repeated reference to the racial dimension of the violence, the preconceived notions of black brutality and political incompetence were given credence. As a result, most novels that deal with this intensification of social unrest firstly reference “black on black”⁸ violence; and secondly, use this reference as a means by which blacks are portrayed as not only unfit to rule by highlighting the acts of brutality, but also politically incompetent by presenting the black characters as being incapable of understanding or explaining this violence.

The suggestion is that part of the reason that black characters are portrayed as incapable of understanding or explaining the violence in their communities is because the writers project their own inability to understand the situation onto their black characters. It is impossible to understand the outbreak of violence that escalated in South Africa from the 1980s until the first democratic elections if it is de-historicised and de-contextualised. The racialisation of the violence also diminishes critical analysis and comprehension. Most of the novels that feature “black on black” violence fail to locate the genesis of this violence within apartheid history, nor does there appear to be an awareness of the role of the state in fomenting this violence. There are references to the liberation movements, in particular the African National Congress (ANC) and Inkatha, but there is no mention of the apartheid government’s role in the violence⁹ or the actions of the white right wing parties. Nor is there any acknowledgement of

⁸ I have placed this term in inverted commas to indicate that it is a problematic term and when used within this thesis it is with the acknowledgement that it is problematic and not accepted as an accurate referencing of the events of this particular historical period.

⁹ The role of the state in the violence that engulfed the townships and rural areas will be looked at in detail in Chapter 5 in the discussion of ‘black on black’ violence in Shirley Bojé’s *Cry Softly Thule Nene* (1992) and other novels. For further discussions on the state’s role see Slone, Kaminer and Durrheim (2000: 468-470), Farred (1992: 217-9 and 225-6), Maphai (1993: 223-7) and Sparks (1991: 275) the contributions of these writers will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 5.

the fact that the violently oppressive system of government was a contributing factor in cultivating a culture of the use of violence as a means of resolving disputes.

Black political involvement in youth novels is then presented as both violent and confused. As the issue of “black on black” violence will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5 I shall list the titles of books where black political involvement is portrayed as a combination of violence and ineptitude. For example, in *The Boy Who Counted to a Million* by Lawrence Bransby (1995) Simon is so ignorant and confused about the advent of the fighting between the ANC and Inkatha supporters that he turns to Matthew, the 10-year-old white boy, for advice on who to vote for. In Barbara Ludman’s *Day of the Kugel* (1989) Joe the playwright and activist betrays his comrades when he is arrested, leaving the fighting to a cynical young white activist Clive.

In Michael Williams’ *Into the Valley* (1990), Walter, the white protagonist goes in search of Gadaffi, a real live hero who turns out to be a thug on the payroll of the sugar plantation owner and town power Bartlett. In this novel Shadreck and Abednigo the servants of McRory, the man that Walter stays with, are equally clueless as to the cause of the violence that has forced them to abandon their home. In Lawrence Bransby’s other novel *Homeward Bound* (1990) black political engagement is shown only as the burning of schools and the necklacing of opponents. Blacks in *The Slayer of Shadows* by Elana Bregin (1996) engage politically with violent brutality driven by ignorance and superstition. In Shirley Bojé’s *Cry Softly Thule Nene* (1992) the violence which we are told is perpetrated by the freedom fighters has become so intense that the black characters are relieved to see the arrival of the army and long for the days of apartheid when they were safe.

Maddy and McCann (1996), Van der Merwe (1994), Ward (1989) and Parker (1978) point out that the black freedom fighter is often depicted as dishonourable or in some way disgraced, and depictions of black political involvement tend to end in opprobrium or failure. The point however is that the depiction of black political engagement as violent, incompetent, dishonest or in some way disgraced serves to undermine the struggle itself. In addition, implied in this

depiction is the suggestion that because blacks are politically inept they therefore cannot be trusted to form a functional government that is sustainable and principled.

3.3.6. The Happy Native

Tötemeyer (1988b: 174-6) points out that there are instances of stereotyping which are portrayals of positive traits; however, if they are stereotypes of the native who is forever happily grinning, dancing and singing their way through their plight then these are just as damaging as negative stereotypes. The impression given by these stereotypes, especially during the era of colonialism, was that the natives blithely existed under the yoke of colonialism, fuelling the notion that it was only a small disgruntled minority that was calling for independence. It was very common for Africans to be portrayed as dancing and singing while carrying out their labours, or for the entertainment of the white onlooker. Although these representations no longer dominate literary portrayals of blackness, they are still featured regularly within certain contexts.

In their analysis of the ‘touristicisation’ of traditional life and the cultures of the indigenous people of South Africa Rassool and Witz (1996) and Witz, Rassool and Minkley (2001) note that an elemental feature of the exoticisation of the other within the context of selling South Africa to international tourists vests greatly on the perpetuation of the happy dancing native stereotype. Compare for instance write-ups on tourism in South Africa and the ways in which they all portray what the tourist might expect to see of the natives. The first write up is found in the “Social Welfare (sic) and Native Mineworkers” in *The Mining Survey*. Vol. II, No. 3 1949; the second is from a press release entitled “Gold Reef City Entertainment” in *Gold Reef City Souvenir Guide* 31st March 1986; and the third is from Amanda Vermeulen’s “Taking SA Tourism into a Rich Ethnic Playground” in the *Business Times* (Supplement to *Sunday Times*) 22nd August 1999 respectively, all of which appear in Witz, Rassool and Minkley (2001).

The ... tourists gazed at dancers in a variety of costumes. Although they may have been a touch unhappy that ‘their dress was disappointingly European’ - ‘on one native a silk shirt of the Dress Fraser tartan, worn with a jockey’s cap’ - they were relieved by the sight of ‘ostrich feathers waving and bobbing to the sound of the ‘fast rhythmic beat from the African drum’ (Rassool and Witz 1996: 346 citing the *Mining Survey*).

The talented traditional dancers, who through years of experience have become '[e]nergetic and polished', can now be seen in 'the hippodrome'. Wearing 'plumes, beads and skins' they were, from the inception of Gold Reef City, expected to be one of the 'main drawcards' (Rassool and Witz 1996: 347 citing the *Gold Reef City Souvenir Guide*).

"ethnic damsels show tourists their traditional African dancing skills" (Witz, Rassool and Minkley 2001: 279 quoting Amanda Vermeulen).

Note that despite the vastly different historical points from which these examples are drawn there is very little change in the ways in which the native is portrayed. The stereotype of the dancing rhythmic native providing entertainment for the white tourist has remained a constant aspect of the ways in which blacks, especially within a traditional context are depicted. The extent to which that has been facilitated in South Africa is the very crux of these two articles in looking at the various cultural villages that have been constructed across South Africa all of which feature dancing natives:

[T]here is a common imagery of rhythmic music and dance that, without exception, the villages offer as the highlight of the tourist encounter. It is the correspondence between the nineteenth-century images of pulsating tribes and the performance of "ethnographic spectacle" that produces notions of authenticity and enables tourists to enthuse that the tribal village is the closest they can get to "the real Africa" (Witz, Rassool and Minkley 2001: 280).

Although the happy native stereotype no longer features prominently in novels in the form that is described by Witz, Rassool and Minkley, slightly more sophisticated versions of the happy native can be noted within certain novels. This native does not have a predilection for dancing per se but they are given to music and song. In *The Red Haired Khumalo* by Elana Bregin (1994) there is a continual reference to how much the black characters like music, not just music but loud black music.¹⁰ Indeed Nkululeko, the main black character, is in a band and he, like the other black characters likes loud music. This repetition of the black association with music is fixated into the mind of the reader, as though the love of music were unique to black people, and in so doing resurrecting the fragments of the happy native stereotype.

¹⁰ The use of music as a means to perpetuate the stereotype of the happy native will be discussed in detail in chapter 6.

MacCann and Maddy (2001) suggest that the happy native stereotype, which typically featured natives dancing and singing has been supplanted by the happy native servant. They point out that this is now the location of the happy native, because despite the difficulties of their circumstances the servants in most of these novels are invariably portrayed as content with their lives and happy to play the buffoon for the amusement of the whites. Examples of such portrayals of servants include: Tom in Toeckey Jones's *Go Well Stay Well* (1979), Elizabeth in *The Boy Who Counted to a Million* by Lawrence Bransby (1995), Alice in Barbara Ludman's *Day of the Kugel* (1989), Johannes in Paul Geraghty's *Pig* (1988), Joseph in Barrie Hough's *Dream Chariot* (1993) and Sophie in Toeckey Jones' *Skin Deep* (1985).

Although no longer singing and dancing they are seen as content to be in servitude to whites, loved and trusted by the white family for whom they have been working for years without complaint. Most of the black servant characters one encounters in these novels have no grievances or problems and seem satisfied to carry on with their lives of servitude. The changing political situation in the country has rendered it politically incorrect to depict bare breasted dancing native girls gyrating for the pleasure of the white onlooker, but these images have been replaced by the native in an apron and engaged in some form of menial task for the white onlooker.

3.3.7. Black Dependency Stereotype

The stereotyping of blacks as dependent on whites is founded on the perception of blacks as the inferior other, who, without white intervention, is incapable of executing all but the most basic of human functions. Black characters are presented as being unable to negotiate personal or financial terrain necessitating white assumptions of the role of primary provider and in some instances caregiver as well. Said (1993: 262-4) points that the colonial subject was encouraged to assimilate Western culture and education by the colonialists, especially within the French colonies, resulting in what he terms the dynamics of dependency. But the limits to the assimilation led to some of the very people who were educated in France becoming the most vocal opponents of the empire. Frantz Fanon (1986: 93) suggests that part of the reason

why these colonial subjects became opponents of colonialism was the realisation that they were “rejected by a civilisation which [they had] none the less assimilated” and the assimilation encouraged a relationship of dependence.

Said goes on to assert that colonial subjects who were at the helm of the anti-colonial movement were simultaneously advocating for the abolishment of colonial rule, while trying to “find a place for themselves within the cultural framework they share[d] with the West” (263) resulting in an ideologically disjunctive collaborative relationship between colonised and coloniser:

To this sort of antagonistic collaboration belong such different configurations of cultural dependency as Western advisers whose work helped native peoples or nations to “rise” ... and those Western champions of the oppressed ... who represented their own versions of the native’s interests (Said 1993: 263).

These relationships that Said is alluding to are examples of the ways in which the dependency is created and perpetuated resulting in the perception of the other as being incapable of functioning without white assistance. The primacy which Western education and culture were given among the burgeoning black middle classes in the colonies greatly influenced the manifestation of the post-colonial state and the relationship that resulted between the new states and the ex-colonial powers, a relationship, which was manifestly dependent. The nature of this relationship is visible today resulting in Said’s assertion that imperialism has not ended, but merely assumed new forms whose “descriptions ... have regularly employed idioms of gigantism and apocalypse that could not have as easily applied to the classical empires during their heyday” (Said 1993: 283). Similarly, Ngũgĩ stated that “imperialism continues to control the economy, politics and cultures of Africa” (1994: 4).

The (post) colonial dependency on the (ex) colony is portrayed as not only manifest in the tangible realm of the political, cultural and economic area but also on the psychological, sub-conscious levels of (un)knowing, Aimé Césaire (1972: 39) calls this the dependency complex. He notes that the colonial subject is purported to present with this dependency complex which is inherent to the colonised subject’s condition, “these groups are psychologically made for dependence; ... they need dependence, ... they ask for it, demand it; ... this is the case with

most colonized people” (Césaire 1972: 40). Césaire notes that this argument is used to justify the continued dominant presence of the West in the affairs of Africa, and the African welcomed this continued Western involvement as he can “not even try to imagine such a situation of abandonment ... He desires neither personal autonomy nor free responsibility” (Octave Mannoni¹¹ as quoted by Césaire: 41). Fanon (1986) goes on to add that according to Mannoni this dependency complex is accompanied by an inferiority complex, which can only be resolved by the establishment of a dependent relationship:

when he [the Malagasy] has succeeded in forming such relations [of dependence] with his superiors, his inferiority no longer troubles him; everything is all right. When he fails to establish them, when his feeling of insecurity is not assuaged in this way, he suffers a crisis (Fanon quoting Mannoni: 93-4).

Following the trajectory of Said, Fanon and Césaire’s discussions on dependence it is possible to discern the origins of the literary portrayals of relationships between blacks and whites which are clearly derived from, and informed by, the inequitable relationship that has existed between the two groups since the point of first contact. The dysfunction of the macro interaction is reflected in the equally dysfunctional engagement among the individuals from the two groups. The dependency that blacks in novels are depicted as having on their white counterparts harkens back to the colonial relations of perceived dependency. Founded on the simultaneous assumptions that blacks are incapable of looking after themselves, and that whites are responsible for looking after blacks and their interests, black/white relationships in literature are sometimes reflective of these assumptions.

Writing about the representation of Africa in children’s novels, Yenika-Agbaw (2008) finds that in scenarios that depict black and white relationships the tendency is for the black character/family to benefit materially from a relationship with white people thus perpetuating the depiction of black people as the white man’s burden. Implied in many of these texts is the notion that black people will benefit from a close association with white people and will especially benefit from the richer cultural heritage of the West than from their own traditional

¹¹ Césaire points out that although M. Mannoni’s conclusions were based on his study of the Malagasy these are the same arguments that are applied to most Africans and their relationship with the West. Fanon (1952/1986: 83-108) also looks at the conclusions drawn by Mannoni in this same study entitled *Prospero and Caliban; The Psychology of Colonization* (1964).

cultures. What is noteworthy in these scenarios is the fact that whilst black people benefit materially the white characters benefit by attaining a greater sense of self-actualization from the relationship. Even if there is some form of personal growth that is realised by the black character from their association with their white counterpart, this is not emphasised to the extent that the material benefit is.

Examples of these beneficial relationships can be found in Toeckey Jones's *Go Well Stay Well* (1979) where Becky is continually receiving gifts and money from Candy and towards the end of the novel Candy's parents are paying for Becky's education. Shirley Bojé's *Cry Softly Thule Nene* (1992) in which Thule Nene is taken in by the Wickhams from an orphanage. But it is the Wickhams' wealth and how it will benefit Thule that is frequently mentioned by the author and the other characters far more often than the fact that Thule, who is alone in the world, might have a family again. In Elana Bregin's *The Boy from the Other Side* (1992) Gabriel, a coloured boy who lives in a squatter camp and is taken in by Lora's family to live with them after he is taken ill. In the same novel Sparrow, a young black boy whose family was shot dead in front of him is also living with Lora's family. In Paul Geraghty's *Pig* (1988) Michael gives Johannes the caretaker some of his late father's clothes on several occasions. In Shelley Davidow's *Freefalling* (1991) Nontokozo goes to live with Shelley's family after her mother abandons her to escape the violence in the townships.

In addition to reflecting the dependence that is referenced by Fanon (1986), Said (1993) and Césaire (1972) what this kind of portrayal does is place into serious question not just black people's ability to look after themselves, but black adults' capacity for looking after their offspring¹². This is especially problematic in a literature that is specifically aimed at young adults, as it informs their perceptions of themselves and the other. Black dependency on the white other is one of the many features of colonial discourses that were used to portray the other as inferior, which still informs post-colonial referential discourses of the black other. This persistent representation of black dependence on whites not only perpetuates the

¹² The economic and financial difficulties experienced by a significant number of black families are not disputed. However, the portrayal of black adult inability to sustain their families without white intervention discounts innumerable black efforts against near insurmountable odds to provide food, shelter and education for their children without white assistance.

stereotypes of blacks as incompetent children, but also gives an incorrect depiction of the realities of black existence. The number of black people who are in the kinds of dependent relationships with whites as portrayed in novels is negligible and yet these novels present it almost as though it were a common occurrence.

In their extensive study of South African youth literature MacCann and Maddy (2001: 118) note that, “worthy black adults are conspicuously missing from the whole of South African children’s literature canon. Adult Africans are either represented as fools, corrupting forces, or hopeless failures”. This is indeed an accurate assessment as most black adult characters are depicted as servants, or engaged in menial tasks, at times violent or corrupt or just plain stupid with little understanding of their socio-political situation even in those novels set in the era of apartheid. Alternative representations of black adults are not often reflected in many of these books and the stereotypes of old loyal black servants continue to dominate much of the writings that include black adults.

Because of the primarily functional role of the black character within many of these novels there is a tendency to produce stereotyped black characters that serve whatever purpose is required to enable the white character to be foregrounded. Black stereotypes have been a facet of the South African literary canon for most of them have become so fixed in the minds of the readership that they are not even recognised as stereotypes any longer. The difficulty that most white writers would appear to encounter is adequately writing the black experience. But because of their desire to include black characters in their books they include black characters that are easy for white readers to identify with because they fit the mould of what they expect of blacks. However, these characters tend to be rejected by black readers because they are grotesque mockeries of blackness.

3.4 Strategies for Countering Stereotyping

Several writers and critics have suggested strategies for countering stereotypes. Stephens (1992) suggests that one of the ways to counter stereotypes is to use various subject positions and depict different social groups without focalising them through the dominant group’s

perspective. Stephens goes on to suggest that locating the text in a minority culture might be another way to combat racism and stereotyping in the text while at the same time ensuring that not all writing is focalised through the white writer's own culture. Inggs (2007) counters Stephens' suggestion by pointing out that despite many authors' attempts to situate stories within other cultures they continue to focalise and filter their stories through an English middle class perspective. I would also point out that the issue of stereotypes in literature will not be countered by a mere change of focaliser or the introduction of multiple focalisers in the text, as it is still possible to depict the focaliser as a stereotype. An example of this is Thule Nene through whom the novel is focalised and yet Thule is still a stereotyped black character.

Inggs (2000, 2002, 2006) also notes that the changes in the South African political arena brought with them changes in the areas of focus within the field of youth literature. According to her the late 1990s saw a discernible shift in focus in youth novels from racial identity issues towards more generic national identity issues, and more specifically adolescent issues, which could arguably be a move away from stereotyping which plagued past writings. By placing emphasis on identity as a national, rather than individual concern and highlighting issues that all adolescents encounter regardless of race, youth novelists were attempting to minimise the difference between the different racial groups and highlight the commonalities.

This move towards a unitary South African identity is cautioned against by De Kock (2004) who notes that despite all efforts to portray South Africa as united under one national identity, cleavages continue to mark the landscape of the country and these cleavages continue to follow the same contour lines of differentiation that were carved out by apartheid. He proposes that the value of difference be acknowledged to enable the nation to move beyond ossified predetermined identities that are dictated to the whole.

Once the representational basis of the ongoing crises of identity in South Africa is acknowledged, we may be able to shift from disputing *what* it is our fellows say we are to *how* it is that they say such things in the first place. In that case we may qualify the perception of ontological crisis (identity fixation) with the memory that identity has always been contingent upon representation and is likely to remain so (*Own Emphasis*) (De Kock 2004: 20).

In a multicultural society like South Africa it is not possible to have one national identity that encompasses all citizens to the exclusion of other identities. A national identity can only exist alongside the other linguistic, cultural and religious identities to which all citizens subscribe. De Kock is quite right in his assertion that attempts at forging a unitary identity are doomed to fail because it necessarily requires of the citizens to relinquish their other identities and embrace the national identity as their only identity. Part of the problem with this approach is that the national identity will either have to be a construct of various aspects of the relinquished cultural identities, or, as is likely, the most dominant cultural identity will be elevated to the status of national identity and this can only result in resistance and strong cultural resurgence by individual cultural groups.

Objectionable as the notion of a singular cultural identity is (De Kock 2004: 21) warns that we should also not adhere so unyieldingly to our differences as to stem the dynamism of culture and identity. He goes on to add that there is a real danger in the process of the new South African identity formation process to embrace the singular unitary national identity that disavows the differences that exist within the South African population. He reminds us that master narratives that presume to write the entire nation are all too familiar in South Africa and have proven themselves to be divisive mechanisms for the subjugation, segregation and exclusion of the majority of the population in the past and we should be wary of them in the future.

Landeg White and Tim Couzens (1984) suggest that in order to counter stereotyping and promote greater racial tolerance writers should endeavour to include in all their work, among other things, the different people, languages, and cultures in South Africa. This approach to countering stereotypes is reinforced by C.R. Botha (2002: 34) who proposes that writers adopt a transculturalist approach, which he defines as “the depiction of members of alternative language groups in the text, in addition to the depiction of members of the target group, by an author who is also a member of the latter group”. Botha would appear to be advocating for a functional literature whose principal role is to “experiment with the theme of trans-culturalism by investigating the cultural diversity of the region in a critical manner” (35). He suggests that

every author should explore the various cultures and groups in their region through various representations in an effort to counter the misperceptions of the other.

I do not necessarily agree with White and Couzens or with Botha, whilst there can be no harm in authors exploring and learning about other groups and writing about them, it cannot, however, be a requirement of writers to do so. It is not the function of writers to write about other cultures. It is, however, the duty of the writer to represent other cultures accurately should they choose to write about them. This is more likely to prevent misrepresentation than making it obligatory to write about other cultures.

3.5 Conclusion

Stereotypes have been a feature of the South African literary landscape from the very onset and because of this established foundation they continue to be a recurring feature in much of the writing by white South African youth novelists. De Kock (2004: 19) is quite accurate in his assessment that the history of South Africa has been dogged by a crisis of naming, “either a naming of people as other than what they might conceive of themselves to be, or a naming of oneself in a constitutive (oppositional or identificatory) relation to others”. This crisis of naming stems from the racially divisive history of this country which, as De Kock points out, reached its pinnacle during the era of apartheid.

I would argue that the crisis stems less from the process of naming and more from the values we attach to the labels and categories we create for ourselves, and each other as a society especially in a divided society like South Africa where certain segments of the population were allotted greater value than others. Stereotypes of black people have been perpetrated throughout the history of South Africa to justify the oppression of the black populace and help to secure white power structures and social controls. Many of these stereotypes gained ascendancy during the era of apartheid, which was the political and legal manifestation of the prejudicial attitudes that gave ferment to the stereotypes. The literary response was to give further credibility to these stereotypes by presenting black characters in stereotype whenever black characters appeared in works of literature. Although there have been noted steps taken

to move South African literature beyond these stark negative stereotyped representations of blackness, remnants of these stereotypes still remain.

Chapter 4: The Importance of Ideology in Literature

An awareness of ideology when analysing the writings of any author is significant because it enables a better understanding of the text itself. Within the South African literary context this is especially important because of the racially charged history of South Africa. The system of apartheid, which dominated South African society for 56 years, permeated and controlled all aspects of life including the production of artistic work. Within any society an author's ideological stance, the ways in which he or she views certain groups within that society and their interpretations and understandings of socio-political issues, is a significant influence on their writing. Even those books that appear to be ideologically neutral have an underlying ideology and close textual analysis thereof can reveal certain aspects of the writer's attitudinal and ideological perspective. In repressive societies such as apartheid South Africa with strong ideologies dictated to the society by the state it becomes virtually impossible for any member of the society not to be influenced and affected by the dominant state ideology. The impact of apartheid is revealed in South African literature both in what South African authors chose to write about and the ways in which they wrote.

As has been repeatedly stated no book is ever free of ideology, and if one reads a book in which ideology appears to be absent it simply means that the book mirrors the reader's own ideological presuppositions (Stephens 1992: 50). He goes on to add that texts do not exist in a vacuum and generally serve the purpose of attempting to influence the reader in accordance with the ideology of the writer, intentionally or otherwise. The importance deduced from a text, its themes, morals and insights into behaviour is never without an ideological dimension or connotation. In addition to this, the ways in which stories approximate reality and its representation also have an ideologically informed foundation. Stephens suggests that writers aim to instil within the reader, implicitly or otherwise, the social values and attitudes prevalent at the time of writing. He finds this to be especially true of children's literature because it generally serves the function of instilling particular socio-cultural values and perceptions in the child that it is assumed, the author and the audience share.

Peter Hollindale (1992: 27-9) points out that implicit ideologies are far more compelling as they consist of norms and practices that are accepted and taken for granted within the society, and which, in all probability, are commonly shared by the author and reader. Stephens concurs, adding that books with overt ideologies tend to be met with resistance and implied in the overt ideology is the suggestion that the position advocated in the book is a minority position. In books where the ideology is subtle it is more difficult to determine precisely what the ideology of the author is and much is inferred by an interpretative reading of the text. Hollindale goes on to argue that not only is ideology inherent in texts, but its primary function is to maintain the status quo by suppressing any articulation of conflicting ideas while giving prominence to the ideologies of the dominant groups within society.

Consciously or otherwise novelists utilise various literary devices to create the story and the characters within their novel. Textual analysis is enhanced by an awareness of the use of these devices within the text. Whether or not specific and direct attention is paid to these devices in the process of analysis, an awareness of their existence informs the understanding of the text and the reasons behind the ways in which it is structured and how the characters are portrayed. This in turn gives the reader an insight into the author's ideological stance, the ways in which he or she views certain groups within society and their interpretations and understandings of socio-political issues that might be dominant at the time of writing. Even those books that make no mention of any particular issues also reveal certain aspects of the writer's attitudinal and ideological perspective.

This thesis centres around the ways in which blackness is perceived and interpreted by white writers in South Africa of youth novels, but Stephens (15) adds that any textual analysis must not only concern itself with what is perceived, but must also decipher the meaningfulness in a text. In the context of South Africa this is especially important because the race of the determiner of textual meaning is of great importance and plays a significant role in their interpretation, perception and reception of a text. Stephens rightly points out that the meaning a reader derives from a text might not necessarily be the intended meaning; the social context of a reader is a key factor in the ways in which meaning is derived within a text. Just as writers are largely influenced by their ideologies when writing a text, readers are similarly

encumbered by their own ideologies, which they bring to bear in their reading and understanding of a text.

However, it is often suggested that the final interpretative voice of a text should be that of the author and not the reader. In his discussion of the works of Hirsch in the field of textual analysis and meaning Robert Crosman (1980: 155-6) asserts that Hirsch ridiculed modernist notions of textual autonomy and argued rather that the meaning of the text could only be that which the author intended. Since no two readers will derive identical meaning from a text the meaning of the text must be settled as being that of the writer. Crosman points out that Hirsch's argument is based on the assumption that a text can only have one meaning. It is not clear how Hirsch suggests one determines the meaning intended by the writer especially in instances where the writer has not given any indication of what the meaning of the text is intended to be.

Crosman counters Hirsch's line of argument by pointing out that many writers do not provide the meaning of their writings, and in some instances they give different interpretations and meaning for the same text. Crosman's point is a valid one in that if authorial textual meaning and interpretation is multiple and changeable, it is not possible to have a single interpretation of a work. Wolfgang Iser (1980: 106) argues that literary works have two poles, the artistic and the aesthetic, the former being the artist's text and the latter being the realisation reached by the reader of the text. Texts therefore cannot be identical in terms of their artistry and their aesthetic and can therefore be said to exist somewhere in between thus further disputing Hirsch's singular interpretative approach.

Whilst it is not in dispute that some authors might have a very definite interpretation of the meaning of their work, it is often difficult for the reader to know what that is and for a text to have any kind of significance for the reader they should be free to interpret it and discover meaning for themselves. Regardless of authorial meaning and interpretation, the derived meaning from a text by a reader is a vital component of the reading and interpretative experience. However the derivation of meaning, textual interpretation and the use of various

literary devices will be discussed in greater detail when dealing with actual novels.

The ideology of a writer and how that informs their writing is determined and influenced by a great number of factors, some more obvious than others, including upbringing, education, economic status and the socio-political environment in which they exist. In this thesis the only factor that will be considered is the socio-political because in a society like South Africa it is not only the most vital of factors, but is also a great determiner of all the other factors that come into play when establishing and determining the ideology of a writer. South Africa is especially interesting because the influences of politics on the social dynamics of apartheid society are as glaring as the racist policies of apartheid, but subtle in equal measure especially among white writers opposed to apartheid. This is because although these writers opposed apartheid, they also benefited from it (Brink: 1983) and despite their protestations their writings are influenced by the ways in which blackness was portrayed by the apartheid propaganda machine.

4.1 Locating the Writer in his or her World

The socio-political context within which a novel is written or the era in which it is set contributes significantly to the novel itself. The works of writers as varied as Chinua Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah, Mariama Bâ, Sembène Ousmane, Thomas Hardy, Zora Neale Hurston, Leo Tolstoy, Toni Morrison, Salman Rushdie, Charles Dickens, Yvonne Vera and V. S. Naipaul all reflect the important influence of socio-political issues. Vital to the analysis and understanding of a text therefore is an understanding of the political and social milieu in which the writer is functioning. Placing a text within its proper historical context is primary in the process of textual enquiry, giving the reader a more nuanced insight into the world of the novelist and therefore the novel itself.

In this study the socio-political landscape of the writer forms the pivotal point of analysis rather than the aesthetics of the text. This is because within the South African context the socio-political topography that informs and influences white writers is of great significance as it also informs the ways in which they see and interpret the world of the black populace

around them and present it for their white youth readership. It would however be disingenuous to give the impression that the writers of the texts merely reflect their own elucidation of the black world from the privileged position of whiteness. These novels also mirror the relationship of the state with its citizenry. This is especially true of those books published during the apartheid era when the state placed severe restrictions on artists who used their art as a means of protest against the excesses of the state. The threat of censorship, or worse outright banning, was a risk faced by all writers in apartheid South Africa and the impact this would have had on them as individuals and their writings is not to be underestimated. In addition to censorship imposed on writers the state attempted to further control the depiction of apartheid through its control of the media. However, despite their best efforts, information on the realities of apartheid accompanied by protest action by the black masses managed to constantly filter through and make its way into the arts and the media.

The systematic separation of the races meant there was very little contact between them and therefore limited opportunities for any form of meaningful engagement. Although aware of the repressive nature of apartheid, most whites managed to exist in a blur of oblivion about the lives of black people and the atrocities being endured by black people at the hands of the state. It is this veil of ignorance that many writers attempted to lift with their work and inform their readership of the impact of apartheid on the black majority. The 1976 student protest was arguably the one event that brought the excesses of the apartheid regime to the forefront of white consciousness.

4.2 The Youth Rebellion of 1976 and its Aftermath

According to Brink (1983: 132) apartheid was presented as a way of solving the problems that were plaguing a multi-racial society and to assuage the friction that could potentially arise between the different races at different stages of cultural development. In order to do this, land was to be allocated to each group so that they could develop at their own pace until they realised political independence. According to the proponents of apartheid its intention was to encourage mutual respect between the different races and cultural groups based on national equality, which would end race based discrimination.

P. Eric Louw (2004: 27-8) adds that the cultural anxiety experienced by Afrikaners at the prospect, of being overwhelmed by a black majority and English political and cultural domination was the impetus that first gave rise to the ideology of apartheid. Afrikaners were of the notion that they would not survive if they did not subjugate the black population, failure to do so would result in Afrikaners being subjugated by blacks, and it was this fear that then propelled the advocating of apartheid. The notion of apartheid was considered superior to the proposed segregation that was being advanced by Smuts' United Party. The argument was that whereas segregation merely ensured black domination by whites within the same political entity, apartheid offered blacks an opportunity to develop themselves, by themselves, in their own polity, thus bringing an end to the domination of blacks by whites as blacks would then be free to rule themselves.

Louw (2004: 42-3) contends that Afrikaners saw apartheid as a means to survive and at the same time preserve not only their own, but the blacks' cultural heritage as well, from being Anglicised. Afrikaners believed themselves to be different from the English because they were not settlers but Africans as they had no colonial home to return to. Not only were they saving themselves, but the blacks as well from the moral decay and slum living of the cities by 'returning' them to their homelands where they would eventually be self-governing. Implied in this phraseology is the suggestion that black people left their 'homelands' and moved to South Africa. However, this argument was used as a means to justify the trans-location of millions of people to areas that many of them had never even been to in order to appropriate black areas for white occupation. And because these areas were declared their homelands from whence they came, there could be no argument against their being returned there to live independent lives of self-determination.

The homelands or Bantustans, initiated by The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act (1959), were areas that were earmarked for the 10 identified tribal groups that comprised the black population, where they would live independently of white interference. Having each been allocated a tribe it was anticipated that all black people would eventually move out of South Africa to their own areas to live free from white subjugation (www.sahistory.org.za).

According to Anthony Butler (2004) through the process of classification people were classified racially and tribally which determined which homeland they would be moved to. Communities and in some instances families were separated because of the classification process. Between 1960 and 1989, 3.5 million people were forced out of their homes and into homelands. The purported aim of this exercise was to ensure that everyone was allocated a politically and economically independent homeland and there they would live and thrive (Butler 2004: 20).

However, the areas allocated to black people, 75% of the country's population, as homelands, which comprised 13% of the total land area of South Africa, were dry, infertile dust bowls with no agricultural or economic potential while all the fertile soil and mineral rich areas were deemed to be in South Africa and therefore white areas (Allister Sparks 1991: 211). In the end, only four homelands were ever realised and granted independence by South Africa. These were Transkei, which was the first homeland to be established, Ciskei, BophuthaTswana, and Venda (Cahoon 2001). The fact that these homelands were not only inadequate in size for the black population, but also incapable of sustaining any form of agriculture or economy was glossed over while the idea of self-rule was foregrounded.

According to Dubow (1995: 81) the foundation for the establishment of homelands was laid in 1952 when a government ethnologist, Van Warmelo, created a 'language map' of the Bantu speakers indicating ten distinct tribes and it was these tribal divisions, derived from this language map, that informed the creation of the Bantustans. He goes on to add that:

Linguistic labels have subsequently provided a convenient basis for the constitution of fictive ethnic groups or 'tribes'. Linguistic boundaries, so often determined in an arbitrary manner, have served as a crucial organising principle of the mid-twentieth-century *de jure* division of South African blacks into constituent racial or ethnic 'population groups'. The creation of apartheid Bantustans is a dramatic expression of a process based on a purposeful conflation of language, culture, race and ethnicity (Dubow 1995: 119).

Linguistic groups are therefore defined as cultural or tribal groups around which policies could be constructed and enforced. Dubow points out that these artificial groups have been

used by social engineers throughout the history of South Africa to institute discriminatory policies and exclusionary laws.

Even though Louw (2004) puts forward an almost convincing justification for apartheid, he is being mendacious in his assertions that race and the subjugation of black people were a later and distant secondary concern and motivation for apartheid. The manifestation of apartheid makes his suggestions palpably untrue as issues of race and black subjugation took centre stage in the implementation of apartheid. The atrocities of apartheid are well documented and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to delve into the history of South Africa in any great detail. However, it is pertinent to note the monumental role that culture and literature played in the policies of the apartheid regime and how that in turn influenced South African writers.

The proponents of apartheid used literature and culture as a vehicle to, at once, extol the system of apartheid and justify the oppression of the other, while anti-apartheid activists used their writing to expose the atrocities of apartheid and its devastating impact on the lives of the black population (Brink 1983; Ndebele 1991). Recognising the significant role played by the arts in society the apartheid regime had policies that encouraged and promoted the production of works that advanced a positive image of apartheid and the Afrikaner culture while repressing those that voiced a contrary opinion (Jackie Grobler 1988).

These policies had a direct impact on the writing community of South Africa, influencing not only how they wrote, but what they wrote. Jean-Philippe Wade (1996: 2) points out there is a direct correlation between the rise of national literatures in Europe and the rise of nationalism. The reason for this is that there is a general belief that any great nation has a great language, and a great language has great books written in it. This phenomenon is evident in South Africa with the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, which saw a concomitant rise in Afrikaans writing as part of a larger process of reviving Afrikaner national identity and pride and consolidating state power.

According to Grobler, (1988: 169) the 1970s saw a build-up in the number of issues with which high school students were increasingly dissatisfied especially in the area of education.

The biggest catalyst of the June 16 protest was the Afrikaans language issue. The Department of Bantu Education's official policy had always been that both English and Afrikaans would be used on a 50/50 basis to teach all subjects in township schools. However, due to a shortage of teachers who were proficient in both languages this policy had never been strictly applied. In 1974 the department issued instructions to the effect that the 50/50 policy was to be implemented in all schools, for all subjects. There was much protestation against this proposal. The students did not wish to be taught in Afrikaans because neither they nor their teachers were proficient enough in Afrikaans for it to be used as an educational tool, but more importantly than that, they saw Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor. Attempts to petition the department proved futile and it was decided to proceed with the implementation of the policy.

Grobler goes on to say that efforts were made by the students to get their principals and the Department of Bantu Education to reverse the policy and by February 1976 these attempts were being undertaken by most schools in Soweto. In June of that year the South African Student Movement (SASM) called for a complete boycott of the winter examinations, and a protest march was scheduled for June 16th which would culminate in a mass rally at the Orlando Stadium. The state and police reaction to this mass action was a brutal wave of repression the likes of which had not, thus far, been seen, resulting in the death of an estimated 500 people (Grobler 1988: 169). According to Allister Sparks (1991: 302) the uprising that had started on June 16 1976 raged for seventeen months before the government was able to contain it with ever increasingly repressive measures. Schools in the townships were destroyed by the uprising, leading to the closure of 40 out of 42 secondary schools and a massive reduction in the number of pupils re-admitted, with teachers resigning in protest against Bantu education (Ben Magubane 2006: 23-4).

Grobler (1988), Sparks (1991) and Louw (2004) all point out that although the implementation of the language policy was one of the main catalysts for the protests there were other reasons that fuelled the protests. Some of these reasons were the general conditions under which black people lived and the myriad pieces of legislation put in place to ensure their continued existence as indentured labour with no rights in their own country, contributed

greatly towards inciting the students. They also suggest that the gaining of independence by Mozambique and Angola as well as the prospects of Zimbabwe realising its independence gave South Africans reason to believe that the end of their own subjugation was also a realisable aspiration.

As a result of the June 16 uprising the proposal to use Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools was dropped and the Department of Bantu Education was renamed the Department of Education and Training. Grobler (1988: 172) also adds that although the immediate effect on race relations was their deterioration, the subsequent effect was to make increasing numbers of white people aware of the conditions under which black people had been living. The apartheid government also instituted a number of legislative¹ changes to appease the masses and alleviate the tension. However, the student riots had infused the struggle for independence with a new vigour and the legislative changes were piecemeal efforts at quelling the revolts and as they were instituted alongside various states of emergency that dominated the better part of the 1980s they had the effect of fuelling the revolutionary impetus further².

¹ P. W. Botha introduced constitutional reforms that had been the brainchild of John Vorster, his predecessor. In 1977 Vorster had set up the Theron Commission to look into how the conditions of the coloured people in South Africa could be improved. The result of this commission was the proposal of a Tricameral parliamentary system. On the 2nd November 1983 70% of the white population endorsed the proposed reforms in a referendum. Elections for the newly created Houses of Representatives (Coloured parliamentarians) and Delegates (Indian parliamentarians) were held on the 22nd August and 2 September 1984, respectively, and in early 1985 the new parliament was inaugurated despite large scale opposition and poor voter turnout in both the Coloured and Indian communities. This new parliamentary system was heavily criticised not only because it did not challenge apartheid, but it excluded the black majority. The government's argument for the exclusion of the black majority was that they were already represented and could exercise their rights in their respective homelands, whereas the Coloured and Indian populations had no homeland of their own and were therefore in need of some form of representation. In addition to this, repeals were made in that year to The Native Laws Amendment Act (1952); (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) commonly known as the Pass Law; The Immorality Act (1959 amended 1957) and The Mixed Marriages Act (1949) (African History nd).

² The United Democratic Front (UDF) was established on the 20th August 1983 mainly in response to the introduction of the Tricameral system and was therefore made up largely of Coloureds and Indians, and with the liberation movements' leadership still banned and either imprisoned or exiled the UDF was able to step in and fill the vacuum in the black areas as well. The first sitting of the new parliament resulted in an eruption of sustained insurrection throughout the townships of the country with the stated aim of rendering the country ungovernable www.nelsonmandela.org/udf. Louw (2004) suggests that the increased anti-apartheid activity was as a result of fear from the left alliance that the reforms introduced by the Botha regime might work thus demobilising the anti-apartheid movement. What Louw clearly does not take into cognisance is the fact that these reforms were doomed to failure and could in no way have demobilised the anti-apartheid movement because the Coloured and Indian representatives were powerless minions, but more importantly, the black majority was still excluded from the centre of power.

The June 16 uprisings ushered in a new level of political awareness that intensified the resistance to the apartheid regime and at the same time brought about significant changes in the black literature that was being produced at the time as it became more politicised and used as one of the weapons against apartheid. The impact of the 1976 riots was also noticeable in the writing that was being produced by white writers who, until that point, had tended to exclude the theme of racial politics and the unjust brutality of apartheid from their work. Both English and Afrikaans literature began to show signs of greater politicisation. By the 1980s writers were becoming increasingly political and the polarisation between black and white writers saw a marked decrease as writers from both ends of the racial spectrum became more vocal against apartheid (Ashraf Jamal 2005: 8-10).

The various states of emergency which were the Botha regime's response to the increased armed insurrection and rioting that followed the student uprising led to a great number of writers being imprisoned and banned. But even as repeals were being made to several repressive laws in a futile attempt to appease the masses, censorship remained largely unchanged. With the increasing political repression many writers saw their work as a significant contribution to the political struggle (Jamal 2005; Ndebele 1991 and Sole 1993), but this was largely true of black writers and it applied primarily to adult fiction. Novels such as Mongane Serote's *To Every Birth its Blood* (1981), Miriam Tladi's *Amandla* (1980), Mbulelo Mzamane's *The Children of Soweto* (1982), Sipho Sepamla's *A Ride on the Whirlwind* (1981), are some of the better known examples of anti-apartheid novels by black authors. One of the best known literary works of this period is Njabulo Ndebele's collection of short stories entitled *Fools and Other Stories* (1983). Although not considered protest literature after the fashion of the other novels mentioned it gives a sensitive depiction of black lives under apartheid, and while it references apartheid it is not overt in its referencing.

Jenkins (1993) notes that although previous writings for children had included race, before the 1976 riots these tended to reflect the status quo and the racial attitudes among whites. This assertion is confirmed by Inggs (2002) who also notes that in the aftermath of the youth riots of 1976 the themes of race and politics began to feature more prominently in the writings of

South African writers. MacCann and Maddy (2001) also note that as the pressure placed on the South African government by the black populace increased so too did the depiction of the black struggle for independence in literature. The youth riots of 1976 gave writers an opening to include the racial issues of South Africa in a more realistic way, and white writers began to use the protagonists in their books to bring greater awareness of the realities of apartheid to young white readers who would be able to empathise with the characters in the books. The very fact that most white youths were ignorant of the effects of apartheid is part of what these books were commenting on and a primary reason for their writing.

Some examples of youth novels that have used the June 16 1976 uprising as part of the narrative include Barbara Ludman's *Day of the Kugel* (1989), Toeckey Jones' *Go Well Stay Well* (1979), Sheila Gordon's *Waiting for the Rain* (1987) and Anne Harries' *Sound of the Gora* (1980). These four novels use the 1976 riots as one of the vehicles with which to discuss the politics of South Africa and the repressive nature of apartheid. However, the portrayal of the black experience of the uprisings is seen through the lens of the white writer's perspective. The manner in which June 16 is portrayed in all four novels reflects authorial ambiguity towards the uprising and indeed the struggle itself. There is a contradictory element to the referencing of the uprising within these novels because while all four novelists clearly recognise it as a necessary feature of the overall struggle against apartheid, anxieties about it are also evident in the narration. It is the contention of this thesis that although the authors of these novels engage in an anti-apartheid discursial parlance this is contradicted within the narrative itself.

This is especially true in *Day of the Kugel* which foregrounds the 1976 uprising more than the other three novels. Although most of the characters in this novel, Joe, Michelle, Stephen and Tracey, actively participate in the uprising itself all their efforts are frustrated and portrayed as futile. Joe is arrested and tortured again, forcing him to betray Stephen's role in the printing and distribution of pamphlets to the police. Stephen is forced to go into exile to escape being arrested himself. Tracey is beaten up by the police and narrowly escapes being arrested with the aid of Michelle. Michelle is also apprehended by the police, but having escaped, loses interest in the struggle, and goes on a shopping spree with her aunt the very next day. She is

further disillusioned by Joe's betrayal of Stephen, which distances her further from the struggle. Clive, although also politically active is the only one to escape the attentions of the police, but through Clive we can hear the authorial cynicism and doubts about the competence of those engaged in the struggle and their chances for success.

Ludman implies that marches, boycotts and protests against apartheid are futile and will be met with arrest and injury and little else. There is no indication in the novel of the historical significance of the uprising itself and the political ground that was gained as a result of it. In focussing on the negative individual experiences and fruitless engagement of largely white characters she equates those inconsequential flirtations with rebellion with the struggle itself. Even the post-riot drive into Soweto to fetch Alice the maid, and subsequent discussions, undertaken by Michelle and her uncle, reveal nothing but the devastating effect of the riot. Joe's arrest further diminishes the struggle by presenting efforts at resistance as ineffectual and doomed to end in failure. This is enhanced by Clive's role in the struggle, because although he is engaged in one of the most dangerous and most important aspects of the struggle of all the characters, his actions belie his convictions.

Clive is smuggling activists across the border, but he is not doing this because he believes in the struggle, but rather because he is offended by the fact that the government labelled and classified him. He is dismissive of the efforts of the other activists or indeed the prospects for the movement's success and states his intentions of abandoning the movement and moving to America. He says of those involved in the struggle "[i]t does take them rather a long time to do anything. ... We'll probably be old and grey, you and I, before they shoot anyone" (1989: 127). Clive and his parents do not support the apartheid system but neither do they believe in struggle to bring about its downfall and through them we hear authorial distancing from both apartheid and the struggle. This novel also explores the theme of the role of the white liberal in the struggle against apartheid by including the white characters in various levels and points of engagement with the movement from the provision of legal assistance to the smuggling of people across the border.

Waiting for the Rain is similar to *The Day of the Kugel* in that it foregrounds the struggle for independence with the riots as one of the elemental features that are being foregrounded. However, Gordon is equally ambiguous about the struggle and we see this through the ambiguity of Tengo, the main black character, through whom part of the novel is focalised. Tengo is the means by which Gordon chooses to convey her uncertainty about the student riots of 1976 and the chosen method for realising independence. Although recognising the need for an end to apartheid Gordon portrays the pitched street battles between students and police as understandable but perhaps not the best approach. This is evidenced by Tengo's own distancing of himself from these activities. Although he is personally abused by the police and is daily witness to the atrocities of apartheid he refuses to engage in the political process and join the resistance movement. He is, however, willing to accept assistance from others to escape so he can pursue his lifelong goal of education.

Gordon's ambiguity about the struggle is also reflected in the way in which anti-apartheid activists are portrayed. Although Joseph, Tengo's cousin and ANC recruiter, is exempt, other activists are likened to little more than marauding criminals terrorising the township residents with acts of violence and abuse. This comparison with criminals undermines the struggle itself and especially the sacrifices of those youths who were fighting for equality and justice. Whilst it is true that certain criminal elements might indeed have used the struggle to camouflage their criminal behaviour these isolated acts of criminality should not be allowed to overshadow the overall struggle. Other incidences that are used in the novel to negatively reflect on the struggle are for example Miriam, Tengo's 15 year old cousin, falling pregnant. Gordon suggests that were it not for the school boycotts this would not have happened, thus placing blame on the struggle and not on Miriam and her boyfriend.

Go Well Stay Well does not place the 1976 riots at the centre of the narrative. Indeed I would suggest that the riots are merely part of the means by which the reader is given additional access to Candy, the white protagonist's political and social education. However, Jones, like the other two authors, displays similar ambivalence about the struggle and I discuss this further in the textual analysis of this novel in the next chapter. However she distances all the characters from the struggle, including Becky who would be the most likely and natural

participant of the uprising. Indeed it is never made clear whether or not Becky did take part in the riots because she is excluded from the narrative by the time of the riots and only returns later. Although passionate about bringing about the end of apartheid, Jones does not allow Becky to become militant and it is the contention of this thesis that this is because Jones does not want to alienate Becky from the implied white reader.

The distance between the characters and the uprising is consistent with textual distance from the same. The uprising, like apartheid, is discussed in educative terms that makes it more academic than a reality. This is largely because much of this information is conveyed through Becky as a means of informing and educating Candy and the implied reader about black realities under apartheid. The fact that the only scene that portrays any of the repression that Becky is referencing is the scene with the soldiers in the park gives an element of the theoretical to apartheid, but even this scene including the emotional outcome is focalised through Candy. Although acknowledging the atrocities of apartheid through Becky's various recounts, Jones does not engage with the topic as rigorously as would be anticipated. Neither is the significance of the 1976 riots reflected after the initial mention of it. Jones not only distances her characters from the struggle but the narrative as well, because although there are innumerable references to apartheid and its horrors the narrative is distanced from it because the main plot and sub-plots centre on generic issues of teenage life that are far removed from the realities of apartheid. Even though the main plot centres on an interracial friendship in apartheid South Africa it does not realise its potential for being a polemic.

The Sound of the Gora also uses the 1976s riots as a significant reference point. Narrated as two interweaving and parallel narratives set in different times it looks at various themes within the context of the two political epochs. The narrative set in 1800 explores the friendship and love that develops between Andre, a boer child, and Nama, an enslaved Bushman girl who works for Andre's mother. The 1976 uprising in Cape Town is the backdrop of the latter narrative. Harries looks at the involvement of the coloured and Muslim communities in the uprising, which is not a common feature in novels that depict the uprising, with emphasis being placed on the black students mainly in Soweto where the uprising first began. However, there is an element of mockery and the jocular in the way in which the uprising is portrayed,

this is done largely through the responses and perceptions of the other characters in the novel and the way in which Yusuf, the black consciousness community leader of the uprising is presented.

No one else in the neighbourhood, not even Yusuf's own mother seems to take him and the struggle seriously. Jokes are made about it, the interweaving of criminal elements with the movement and its intrusion on meetings and protests is also a comical element that undermines the seriousness of the undertaking of the students. There is included in this depiction a sense of sport and amusement in the way Andre and Yusuf are chased by the police and the way that Ringo, the local thug, is eventually killed by the police at the protest march. While the important role of the 1976 riots is looked at in this novel, its portrayal does not adequately reflect its significance.

The literary importance of the 1976 riots is not confined to those novels that reference it or centre the plot on this event, it is also reflected in the inclusion of race and racial inequality and engagement that was a growing thematic concern in novels written in the 1980s³. The 1976 riots opened up a literary space for the discussion and problematising of themes and issues that were excluded before, despite the fact that the potential for banning or arrest was still a threat for many writers. Themes such as interracial friendships were explored in novels such as; *A Cageful of Butterflies* by Lesley Beake (1989), which explores the interracial friendship between Mponyana and Frank. *The Kayaboeties* by Elana Bregin (1989) examines prejudice and friendship between four white children Charlie, Pecker, Christopher, and Alan and a black child, Sam who discover tolerance and commonality in humanity while forming a band. *Pig* by Paul Geraghty (1988) looks at the life of a recently bereaved young white boy Michael; who discovers friendship, guidance and comfort from an old black man, Johannes, who gives him the fortitude to withstand the racist alienating school environment.

Other themes explored in youth novels in the post-1976 era are interracial relationships and identity politics. These were subjects that were especially taboo in apartheid society because

³ I am confining the reference to novels written in the 1980s because of the heightened political tension in the country during that period and also because after the release of political prisoners and the unbanning of political parties in February 1990 literary freedom was no longer such contested ground.

interracial sexual engagement was legislated against with the very essence of apartheid being founded upon racial division, classification and distinction. Toeckey Jones' *Skin Deep* (1985) not only explores an interracial relationship between a coloured boy, Dave, and a white girl, Rhonda, but it also exposes the artificiality of racial classifications because until Dave tells her, Rhonda is not even aware of the fact that he is coloured. *Down Street* by Lawrence Bransby (1989) explores very similar themes with a similar plot line in which Christina the coloured girl and Ted the white boy fall in love but Ted, like Rhonda, does not realise that Christina is coloured until she informs him, thus emphasising the artificiality and fallibility of the system of apartheid's racial classification. Similar to the themes of racial inconclusiveness found in *Sound of the Gora*, these novels expose the blurred racial lines that resulted from generations of miscegenation and apartheid's inefficacious attempts to contain both that history and prevent further miscegenation with distinct racial categories and barriers.

Other notable changes in novels that were written after the 1976 uprising were the ways in which oppressed groups were depicted in these novels. The inclusion of black, coloured or Indian characters in these novels was no longer confined to mere gratuitous mention. Authorial efforts to portray the realities of the oppressed led to characters from these various groups being either the main protagonists or indeed the only characters featured in a novel to foreground their communities and realities. Examples of such novels are *The Strollers* by Lesley Beake (1987), which explores the harsh realities of coloured children in Cape Town living on the streets and their daily struggle to survive. *Love David* by Dianne Case (1986) through David and Anne, both coloured children, looks at the harsh realities of life in the township and dysfunctional family dynamics. *Journey to Jo'burg* by Beverley Naidoo⁴ (1986) gives a sympathetic look at the hardships experienced by black families in their continual struggle against poverty and apartheid.

Critics such as Wade (1993); Maddy and MacCann (1996) and MacCann and Maddy (2001) have criticised much of this writing for failing to locate the problems encountered by these communities within the orbit of apartheid. They maintain that these authors tend to portray

⁴ Beverly Naidoo's work has not been mentioned before as this thesis is looking only at the works produced by white writers. I have included it in this section however just to illustrate the themes that were being explored by novelists after the 1976 uprising.

issues of poverty, displacement and homelessness as though the victims were responsible for their predicament. They maintain that in failing to historicise social issues many of these writers underestimate the long-term impact of apartheid on all aspects of life in South Africa beyond the political. This inability to recognise the role of apartheid in determining all facets of black lives is one of the major shortcomings of many of these novels.

The student uprising of June 16th 1976 is considered one of the momentous events in the struggle against apartheid. Its impact was felt domestically and globally, and the visual images that were generated by these riots have become some of the most recognised images of oppression the world over. What makes the uprising all the more historic is the fact that it was the first significant stand against the apartheid regime for decades and it was one of the longest sustained internal protest actions in the fight for independence. However, it is not just the changes that happened in the political arena that are notable, but the influence it had in the literary arena as well especially among white writers.

Even though the realisation of independence was not for another two decades, the process was, arguably hastened by the student uprising. The government's response to the subsequent boycotts and riots that engulfed the whole of South Africa was as predictable as it was ineffectual: the rupture had already occurred and its reversal was impossible. Aided by the efforts of South Africans in exile and the growing numbers of protesters in other countries who were becoming increasingly vocal about the treachery of apartheid, putting pressure on their own governments to disengage with South Africa, the demise of apartheid was inevitable (Culverson 1996). The predictability of the outcome of the struggle against apartheid did not, however, prevent the apartheid regime from taking every possible step to halt it and the focus on writers and publications was increased leading to the firmer application and necessary amendments to existing laws.

4.3 Legislative Apartheid and Silencing the Writer

The changes in the thematic focus of writers in South Africa was met with a concomitant increase in the introduction, application or amendment of various pieces of legislation⁵ intended to give the state greater control over the production of literature and curb the publication and distribution of those materials deemed unsuitable, divisive or a threat to the state. Parker (1978: 2-3) points out that the correlations between politics and art is evident in much of South African writing. But within all of this there is a paradox between political restrictions which give rise to art, and the lack of freedom for artistic expression, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the laws of the apartheid regime that were intended to control artistic production⁶.

The Publications and Entertainment Act (1963) gave the government power to review all artistic production with the authority to ban anything, which was felt to be potentially harmful to the morals of the state and its citizens. According to Brink (1983: 78) this law was, ostensibly, intended to safeguard the nation by preventing literary and visual attacks on religious and sexual freedom. This enabled the government to ban the importation of books and films from overseas as well as banning most of the leading black and coloured writers at the time.

In 1974 a new Publications Act was passed by parliament with the only real changes being the right of appeal to a court of law being curtailed and replaced by a Publications Appeal Board.

⁵ De Lange (1991) undertook a detailed study of the impact of censorship on the various writing communities in South Africa and looks at various pieces of legislation implemented by the apartheid government in order to curtail the influence of writers on the general population and its struggle against apartheid. In her book *The Muzzled Muse*, she also looks at how these controls impacted on the writer. A significant proportion of this section is based on her work.

⁶ Parker does an interesting assessment of some apartheid legislative misnomers for example; The Citizenship Act (1949) did not confer citizenship, instead it withdrew citizenship from certain people under specified circumstances. The Industrial Consolidation Act (1956) did not regulate employer/employee relations, but rather split the trade unions along racial lines, and ensured job reservation for white workers. The Extension of University Education Act (1959) prohibited qualified black students from attending the University of Cape Town and University of Witwatersrand. The Publications and Entertainments Act (1963) established a mechanism for the censorship of books, films and other artistic forms.

This act was amended in 1978 following the banning of Afrikaans books⁷. The amendment stipulated that a committee of experts would determine whether the book had literary merit, which would mitigate against a complete ban. The second amendment was on the issue of the audience of the book, whereas before the concern had been the impact of these writings on all citizens, now the focus was turned to the likely reader of the book, which would allow for a projection on the size and nature of the book's potential readership (Margreet De Lange: 1991).

The Internal Security Act of 1976 amended the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950⁸, which pertained specifically to the banning of people. A banning order not only restricted the activities and movements of the banned person but also affected third parties associated with the banned person. According to De Lange (1991) South Africa was unique in its banning of individuals. This restricted the person in question to a specific geographical area and limited the number of people they could be in same room with. Their work was also banned and this included work produced before they were banned, neither could they be quoted or produce any new work, thus truly silencing them.

De Lange goes on to say that the amended Publications Act (1978) applied to all writings produced both inside and outside of South Africa and applied to everyone regardless of race. Yet despite outward appearances this piece of legislation, like so many other apartheid laws was designed to protect and enhance Afrikaner interests, and to silence dissenting black voices. Whereas the work of white writers could possibly avoid censorship by being declared of literary worth or having minimal negative effect on the likely white readership, when these two appellate avenues were applied to black writing they had the opposite effect. Black writings were seldom considered to have any literary value and since the likely readers of black writers were considered to be the millions of angry black masses, black writers tended

⁷ Andrea Brink's *Kennis van die Aand* was the first Afrikaans book to be banned in 1974, followed by Etienne LeRoux's *Magersfontein, O Magersfontein* in 1977. Although LeRoux's book received the Hertzog literary award it was still banned, causing a huge outcry from the Afrikaans community and resulting in the amendment of the publications act (Venter 2007; De Lange 1991: 42-3).

⁸ In 1966 46 writers were banned in South Africa in accordance with The Suppression of Communism Act (1950) which effectively meant that these writers' work could not be sold, read, published, distributed or even quoted in South Africa (Peterson 2006: 161).

to be banned with no hope for appeal. “Banning was a form of silencing that was used almost exclusively against black writers” (De Lange 1991: 11).

Like all other pieces of legislation that were passed during the apartheid era the laws on censorship were designed to promote Afrikaner interests, enhance Christian morality and protect the state. The specifications of applicability that were elaborated on in the amended Publications Act are a clear indication that the citizen in whose interests these laws were devised was the white and mainly Afrikaans segments of the population. The qualifications that specified the profile of the likely reader were mainly that they should be educated, professional and law abiding. These stipulations precluded a significant percentage of the black population because very few black people had any education or a profession and under a system of oppression none of them were likely to be law abiding when most of the laws were designed specifically to repress them and render even the most innocuous of action potentially illegal (De Lange: 1991).

What determined the undesirability of a publication was not how the readers responded to it, but rather the fact that it was deemed potentially dangerous to the reader, and the power to judge and determine this lay solely with the censors. The Publications and Entertainment Act of 1963 aimed to place greater censorship and restrictions on publications thought to be potentially harmful to the state but during the first 10 years of the act’s introduction not one Afrikaans literary work was banned or censored under this law. De Lange goes on to point out that one of the main reasons why Afrikaner authors were hardly affected by this law is the fact that the censors did not want to ban one of their own and create disunity within the Afrikaner community, and the second reason is that most of the Afrikaner writers at the time were more interested in aesthetics than politics.

Brink (1983) argues that the fear of rejection by the rest of the Afrikaner community is the main reason many Afrikaans writers either endorsed apartheid or simply did not speak against it. There is also the very real possibility that a great number of them actually agreed with the system of apartheid and were being quite sincere in their endorsement of it. Having grown up under the system of apartheid it is not implausible that many Afrikaans writers did not find

apartheid to be an objectionable state policy. Parker (1978: 5) suggests that many Afrikaans writers used their art to support the apartheid regime and affirm the political status quo, suggesting that this happened largely because they not only believed in it, but also because they benefited from it. De Lange (1991: 15) quotes Hendrik Verwoerd when he pointedly stated what the traditional Afrikaner's conception and understanding of the role of the writer in society was: "what is required of the writer is not a question but an affirmation", and a significant number of Afrikaner writers did just that, bolstering the apartheid government and perpetuating the negative perceptions of blackness to further justify the policy of apartheid.

When the first Afrikaans book was finally banned there was extensive media coverage of it and the resultant fallout led to reforms to the ways in which the censorship laws were applied. Placing emphasis on the literary merit of the work and the likely reader enabled the censorship board to be more flexible in issuing banning orders especially when the writer in question was white because banning a white writer tended to create more damage than the book itself. Because white writers now benefited from the racially differentiated application of the law, it created tension between black and white writers and gave the impression that white writers were either aligned with the government or that they could be bought off (De Lange: 1991). However much of this doubt was soon dispelled as a growing number of white writers grew increasingly more vocal in their condemnation of apartheid. The laws designed to control writers and what they wrote were largely unsuccessful as anti-apartheid literature continued to be produced. The banning orders tended to have a reverse effect to that which was desired as they tended to generate more interest in the writer and the book than would have probably been the case had the state ignored them.

4.4 Conclusion

The importance of the writer in society is nowhere better illustrated than by the responses of oppressive regimes to literary works that criticise them or their promotion of those works that extol them. Efforts by South African writers over time to cultivate a literature that is distinctly South African have been encumbered with divisive factors such as race, language and the history of the country. However these continual attempts point to the significance of literature

within a society as a tool for capturing all facets of that society and serving as a reflection of the society as well. The apartheid regime's recognition of the socio-political importance of the writer is nowhere more succinctly exemplified than by the numerous pieces of legislation enacted and boards established to control materials that were being published.

The function of the writer in South Africa, historically, has been a precarious balancing act between the production of art for its own sake and the compulsion to use art as a conveyor of socio-political commentary. This was particularly true among black writers whose work it was felt must, with every stroke of the pen, make another incision in the heart of apartheid. The struggle ethos was that luxuriating in the production of art for its own sake was not an option available to the South African writer. But as Ndebele (1991) accurately pointed out, the two are not mutually exclusive, and the lauding of sub-standard writing simply because it is sufficiently political undermines the art.

The end of apartheid has seen a paradigm shift in the debates about the role of the writer in South Africa, moving away from the overtly dualistic arguments over the function of literature in our society towards more content-based contemplations of those writings. What is most interesting about this change in focus is the fact that there appears to be a general consensus that apartheid is no longer a subject worthy of literary attention. Apartheid's effects are a recurring feature in much of youth literature, poor blacks living in squalor without access to education and health care, but devoid of context and historicisation they leave the reader with the impression that the victim is to blame for the conditions under which he or she is living.

The socio-political environment in which writers exist shapes their ideology as well as influencing and impacting on their writing, dictating to a great degree what they could write about. The impact on writers of the 1976 uprising exemplifies this assertion. The changes in the themes and focal areas of many writers subsequent to the uprising is a clear indicator that a writer's work will inevitably be influenced by their environment, but so too will the ideology they advance within that work. The Soweto riots remain a key turning point in the progression towards independence in South Africa, it points to the equally important role of the youth in our society. Yet despite the recognition of the importance of the youth, and the rhetoric that

accompanies this recognition, youth literature in South Africa still commands the least amount of attention and interest within both academic and commercial circles.

Chapter 5: White Writing Black after the 1976 Uprising

5.1 Room to Manoeuvre

Black characters have always featured in novels written by white writers, and it would be misleading to give the impression that the 1976 riots marked the point at which black characters were first included in these novels. What the 1976 riots introduced into the work of white authors was a greater inclusion of novels that challenged the racial and political ideology of the apartheid regime (Jamal 2005:8). Jamal argues that resistance culture needs to be proactive if it is to escape the strictures of oppression and end up simply reacting to oppressive regimes. For this reason some writers began to include black characters that were not merely stereotypes, but attempted to portray in a more realistic fashion the devastating effects of apartheid on the black populace.

Jenkins (1993) notes that after 1976 white writers of youth fiction began to use the protagonists in their books to inform and educate their young white readers about the realities of apartheid by creating black characters with whom they could sympathise. The white population, youth and adult, was sheltered from the brutal veracity of the system of apartheid and it is this shroud over the truth that some of these novels were attempting to unveil. Bentley and Midgely (2000) note that informing young white readers about the realities of the black populace is not only a feature of apartheid era literature, but continues to be an integral aspect of post-apartheid literature.

Inggs (2002) suggests that another reason for the changes in the portrayal of black characters was the increased awareness among white writers that their audience was no longer solely white and so they undertook to reflect this changing audience in their writings. However, it is important to note that it is not only the changes in the politics of the country that propelled these writers to write about black reality but also the fact that they wanted to give voice to the black majority and to inform their white readers about the brutal and inequitable nature of apartheid. This Bantuist compulsion to be the vehicle by which the voice of the other is amplified is frequently accompanied by a paternalistic omnipotence, determining the portrayal

of the other and means of redress. Rather than facilitate a means through which black people can recount their own experiences of racism, poverty and disenfranchisement, the Bantuist does it for them, influencing the representation of the experiences of the other.

This appropriative approach raises a fundamental question that we revisit throughout this thesis with regard to writing the other, especially if the other is being written by members of the dominant oppressive group in their society. Kelwyn Sole (1993) argues that in view of the history of black oppression in this country it is only possible to write about blackness if you are black, thus precluding white writers from being able to do so. For Töttemeyer (1988c) the debate around the representation of blackness is not only a question of whether white writers can write credible black characters which reflect the black experience accurately, but also whether or not black children are able to find positive images of themselves presented in this literature with which they can identify.

Bentley and Midgely¹ (2000) stand out as one of the few voices that feel that white writers have been successful in their efforts to give voice to black youths and other marginalised groups in what they refer to as crossing over. In this process, a white writer uses a range of different races and cultures in their novel in order to cross over the various barriers of race and culture. They do not question the propriety of voicing the other nor indeed the ways in which the other is portrayed in these novels that voice them.

One reason for the general consensus around the inability of white writers to write about the black experience is explained by Ward (1989) who notes that most readers outside the continent derive their information about Africa from novels, newspapers and similar writings which he considers to be problematic. His argument is that if readers derive their understanding of apartheid from white writers, it is the writer's perspective and response to apartheid that is predominant, thus focusing the issue of apartheid away from the black public. *Go Well Stay Well* (Toeckey Jones) is an excellent example of this very point raised by Ward. In this novel it is the white character Candy's reactions to apartheid and its impact on her black friend Becky, being presented to readers. What is emphasised in the novel is not

¹ Additional aspects of Bentley and Midgely's argument in this regard are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Becky's experience of oppression but Candy's response to her vicarious experience of apartheid.

Ward goes on to add that stories written by white writers reflect a sense of unease and a sense of exile, which is not merely existential but historical as well. Ward's suggestion informs the arguments behind the ongoing debate around the propriety of whites writing about blackness especially in a society like South Africa with such a racially charged history. Ward's assertions that white writers' recounting of the black experience of apartheid places more emphasis on their own engagement with it is averred by Brink (1998) who also notes that the black struggle with apartheid was appropriated by white liberal writers to formulate part of their personal experience. As mentioned, Brink argues that the mere fact that the white writer is able to identify with the black struggle does not mean they are able to write about it without being false and inappropriate. Peterson (2006: 182) argues that even the best intentioned white liberal writer who attempts to reflect the black situation ends up coming across as either patronising or simply regurgitating black stereotypes.

Part of the problem with white writers writing about black experiences is the appropriation of the subjectivity of the other. In 1985 the South African Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) conducted a study which concluded that "otherness had contaminated South African society to such an extent that no amount of social engineering could hope to restore a semblance of normality" (cited in Charles Malan 1995: 17). One of the projects conducted in the HSRC study was a comparative literary analysis of race in literature, and it found that South African writers' extensive use of stereotyping and isolation of the other was unequalled in other disciplines. The research found that the subjectivity of the other had been dispensed with to such an extent that they had become a voiceless, faceless mass about and for whom others write or speak, the other's subjectivity has been "unfocused, the subject fragmented in an endless field of discursivity" (Malan 1995: 20).

In his discussion of the images of black people in the media Stephen Small (1999: 53) points out that these images "influence the attitudes, expectations and responses" of both black and white people within various communities. He goes on to add:

These images are also important because they do not reflect the general experience of black people – they abbreviate it, encapsulate it, and in doing so distort it. Though they appear to present a range of roles such images are overwhelmingly narrow, unrepresentative and stereotypical. This means that given the dramatic patterns of residential segregation most whites get their views and beliefs about blacks not from personal experience but from the media.

Although Small is speaking about the ways in which black people are portrayed in the American media, in which he includes television, films and print (books, magazines and newspapers) his observations are applicable to South African society and the ways in which black people in youth novels specifically are depicted.

In this chapter three novels, *Go Well Stay Well* (Toeckey Jones 1979) *Cageful of Butterflies* (Lesley Beake 1989) and *Cry Softly Thule Nene* (Shirley Boje 1992) are closely analysed for their representations of blackness within the field of South African youth literature. Various aspects of the ways in which the black characters are portrayed are examined, paying particular attention to the use of stereotypes as discussed in chapter 3. The way in which this will be done is to look specifically at ways in which the relationships between the black and white characters are depicted. All three novels centre around a friendship between a black and white character and the ways in which these friendships are presented in these novels is part of the process of constructing the other. Inggs (2004 and 2006) notes that prior to the 1990s most novelists struggled to depict friendships between black and white characters because the laws of the country militated against such friendships developing. However, when such friendships were portrayed they were either in a rural or farm setting, accidental or secretive.

Tötemeyer concurs with this assertion (1988: 81-2), pointing out that farms or rural areas presented fewer restrictions for the authors wishing to depict interracial friendships. MacCann and Maddy (2001: 69-70) note, however, that the black characters in these friendships tend to fall into one of two categories; the first being the “lost race” where the black character is sacrificed like Mponyana in *A Cageful of Butterflies* or Tsepo in *Forever Young Forever Free*. The second category is that of the friend who enables the white character to attain some form of self-actualisation or redemption like Becky in *Go Well Stay Well*, Solomon in *Homeward*

Bound, Samuel in *The Kayaboeties* and Joe in *The Day of the Kugel*. In these novels we are given examples of a variation of these types of friendships and the same is true for the relationships that will be looked at in chapter 6. In *Go Well Stay Well* the friendship between Becky and Candy is secret and serves to provide Candy with a means for self-actualisation, in *Cageful of Butterflies* the friendship between Mponyana and Frank occurs in a farm/rural setting and Mponyana is sacrificed to save the life of Frank, and in *Cry Softly Thule Nene* the relationship that develops between Thule and Wickhams is inadvertent and eventually helps Fay with her transformation and redemption.

Because the period under consideration is relatively long, but more importantly is representative of significant changes in the political arena, it was felt that it would be instructive to look at a representative novel from each of the three decades between the 1976 riots and the 1994 elections. The remainder of the 1970s were influenced by the fallout from the student riots and marked by an unleashing of greater state forces to suppress the ensuing unrest. The 1980s were a period of great political turmoil with the introduction of the tricameral parliamentary structure and a series of states of emergency being enforced to try and withstand the wave of political unrest that was engulfing the country in response to the African National Congress/United Democratic Front's call to make the country ungovernable. The first half of the 1990s saw unprecedented changes taking place in a relatively short period of time with the release of political prisoners, the unbanning of the liberation movements, the negotiation of a political settlement and a new constitution culminating in the first democratic election in the history of South Africa. However, all these changes in the political arena incited a wave of violence from various sectors that engulfed the country (Sparks: 1991).

5.2 Befriending the other in *Go Well Stay Well* by T. Jones (1979)

This novel depicts a friendship that develops between two girls, Becky the black girl, and Candy the white girl, during the era of apartheid. Set in the months before the 1976 student riots this novel sets out to explore the difficulties of establishing such a relationship between the two races in a racially intolerant society with repressive laws designed to keep them apart. The way in which the narrative is told clearly reflects an attempt by the author to inform and

educate the implied reader about apartheid, its laws and impact on the black population. This novel is not in any way didactic as might be suggested by the fact that it is intended to educate and inform, but it is obvious from the narrative structure that enlightening the reader about apartheid is central in the novel.

In this novel Jones uses the individual relationships existing between the various characters to demonstrate apartheid and its impact. These relationships are, although presented as interconnected, in fact structured in pairs such that we get black/white (Becky and Tom/Candy), liberal white/racist white (Candy/Colin), English/Afrikaans (Candy/Dirk). Each of these pairs is symbolic of apartheid society and characterises the racially and ideologically factionalised nature of South African society under apartheid. The analysis below uses the pairings of Candy and Becky and Candy and Tom, which are the only two black/white character pairs, represented in this novel to examine the depiction of blackness and the experience of apartheid. The other pairs, although significant in and of themselves, are beyond the scope of this thesis and will therefore not be analysed.

Bentley and Midgely (2000), although writing about post-apartheid literature, argue that the dysfunctional and fragmented families reflected in the youth novels mirror the dislocation of the nation. In this assertion they are supported by Inggs (2007) who notes that youth novels use the politics of interpersonal relationships to mirror the national socio-political realities and the racial tensions within those interpersonal relationships to reflect the racial tensions on a larger scale. I would argue that this is precisely what Jones is attempting to reflect within this novel. The tensions in the relationships between the white and black characters are not only a result of the system of apartheid, but they are also a reflection of that system.

Candy is the focalising agent within this novel and all aspects of the story are presented to us from her point of view through a third-party narrator. She is also the pivotal character around whom the core relationships presented in this novel are centred. This double emphasis on Candy immediately suggests to the reader her importance in the novel, but also centralises her responses to apartheid. Indeed, this is the most problematic feature of the novel because in fact Candy is, until meeting Becky, unaffected by apartheid. Although it is Becky who is affected

by the repressive laws of apartheid Jones places more significance on the secondary impact that they have on Candy as a direct result of her friendship with Becky. Because the narrative is intended to inform the implied reader about apartheid a representation of both Becky and Candy's points of view would have been more illuminating. J. A. Kearney (2003:3) notes that white consciousness should also be given considerable attention because of what it reveals about itself in novels that deal with politics, especially the ways in which political situations are presented and interpreted. The validity of Kearney's point is not in contention; however it is the disputation of this thesis that important as the white perspective is, in this particular novel a reflection of the black psyche would have been even more instructive.

Stephens (1992: 15) points out that in textual analysis it is important to determine who sees and who determines meaningfulness in the text. This is especially relevant within a novel that is looking at the impact of apartheid. In giving only a white point of view of the effects of apartheid the meaningfulness of the text is very different to what it might have been had the reader been given the black perspective. Jones' choice of focalising only through Candy, though textually limiting, is also reflective of the social context in which the novel was written. The implied reader would have not only more readily identified with Candy, but would also have, in all probability, rejected a subject position proposed through Becky's character. Crossman (1980: 151) argues that the meaning of a text can only be fully understood when placed within the proper context.

Stephens (1992: 69) not only concurs with this assertion but adds that the social context will greatly influence the content of the book with the author either encouraging the reader to accept or reject the values and attitudes that prevail at the time. It is indeed considered one of the functions of the writer to reflect social realities. D. B. Ntuli (1987: 129) argues that writers consider themselves to be the voices of their respective community and therefore feel obligated to point out society's shortcomings. Whilst there is some validity to Ntuli's claims, especially within the apartheid context, it is also equally true that many writers did not consider the system of apartheid to be problematic and therefore did not speak out against it.

Although Becky is not a focalising character she is one of the main characters in the novel. As mentioned in chapter 3 Becky is exceptional in relation to most black characters in that she is a well-developed character with a history and a voice. Unfortunately her voice is used largely to inform and educate Candy about apartheid and it is only through this process of enlightening Candy that we are given any insight into Becky herself; we only hear or see events from Becky's point of view when she is recounting them to Candy. Becky's immediate emotional response is not revealed as the events are recounted in the past tense and the reader is not given the benefit of the effect these occurrences have on her. This is one of the weakest points of the novel because the novel is clearly intended to inform the reader about black reality under apartheid and yet the novel's point of view is from a white perspective and not the central black character in the novel. Whilst the reader is given an in depth understanding of how Candy feels about her relationship with Becky and the effect it is having on her life, we are never at any time given a sense of how it impacts on Becky.

From the moment we are introduced to Becky we are immediately made aware of the fact that she is not like other blacks. The fact that she offers help to Candy in the middle of a crowded street in the centre of Johannesburg in 1976 is very unusual considering not only the predominant race relations at the time, but the laws that dictated interracial relations. However, it does present Becky as exceptional, as her actions reflect not only compassion, but also an element of bravery, because Becky had no way of knowing how Candy would react to being helped by a black person and would be justified in expecting an adverse reaction.

There are other ways in which Jones indicates that Becky is not like other blacks. One of these is the fact that she is presented to us as having a sense of humour, and is very chatty with few inhibitions or any of the fear that one would expect to find in a young black woman around white people, especially because there is nothing to suggest that she has interacted with white people in any other context than as enforcers of apartheid. We are also told that Candy is surprised to find that Becky is pretty because she has never thought of African features as being attractive. But Becky's features are in 'perfect proportion' (9) thus making her attractive. The implication here is of course that African features are not usually in proportion

and are therefore not normally attractive, ergo Becky having perfectly proportioned features serves to distinguish her from other blacks.

During their first conversation Becky's future function in Candy's life is revealed. She tells Candy about her home and the general housing situation in Soweto. Candy is surprised to learn of the poor standard of living in the township, of which she appears totally ignorant. Candy's ignorance is typical of white youths at the time, who led sheltered and very separate lives and knew nothing of the realities of the lives of the black population. Becky therefore serves as an educative tool for both Candy and the reader, but she also has an additional role which is arguably more important than that of providing information about apartheid and its laws; she is the means by which Candy learns about herself, making her role largely functional, enabling Candy to realise a higher level of self-actualisation.

5.2.1 Equalising Relations in an Unequal Society

This novel attempts to establish a relationship of equals in an unequal society but the author is constricted in her efforts by a number of factors. The first and most important of these is the fact that the reader is only given the white point of view because the entire novel is focalised through Candy, which automatically legitimises white primacy. The second impediment is that Becky is constructed as a largely functional character in educating Candy and the reader about apartheid. The third factor undermining the novel is the fact that the reader is never given the benefit of Becky's perspective on her relationship with Candy and its impact on her. This one-sided perception of the relationship reflects its inherently unequal nature, because Becky's feelings and responses to what is possibly her first and only white friend are made to seem inconsequential by not being vocalised. The fact that they contribute nothing to the story, which is essentially about Candy, means that they are therefore dismissed. The focus on Becky's experiences of apartheid is emphasised only because it enables Candy to react to them. This is the appropriation of the black experience referred to by Ward (1989) and Brink (1998).

Another aspect of the novel that marks the relationship as unequal is the social and economic disparities between the two friends; enabling Candy to support Becky financially undermines any notion of equality. Candy decides she is going to compensate Becky for her travelling costs and at that moment introduces an element to their relationship that will magnify its inequality. We also learn that part of the reason for Candy wishing to learn Zulu is to help Becky financially by insisting on paying her for the lessons. Assisting the financially and economically disempowered other is a common element in texts that feature black and white relationships and which, according to Inggs (2007: 36), locks the black character into a position of continued disempowerment. Novels such as *Cry Softly Thule Nene* (Shirley Boje 1992); *Zolani Goes to Yeoville* (Georgiana King 1995); *The Boy From the Other Side* (Elana Bregin 1992); *The Kayaboeties* (Elana Bregin 1989); *Waiting for the Rain* (Sheila Gordon 1987); *Pig* (Paul Geraghty 1988) and *Sharp Sharp Zulu Dog* (Anton Ferreira 2003) to mention a few all portray instances of black characters receiving financial/economic assistance from a white character, thus enhancing the black character's disempowerment. By introducing economics into a relationship there is an immediate shift in the power dynamics and the relationship changes from one of mutual affection and equality to one of patronage on the one hand and indebtedness on the other.

It is the contention of this thesis that the reason this is an elemental feature in many texts is the fact that the desire to depict interracial relationships is not an adjunct to a concomitant perceptual transfiguration of the black subject. Bantuesque discourses and racial histories are the pivotal point from whence these distortions emanate informing the construction of the fictional relationship which makes the economic empowerment of the white character a fundamental part of the depicted relationship and which necessitates the disempowerment of the black character, making an equal relationship impossible. Seldom do we find books in which the black and white characters are economically on a par, rarer still an inverse of the above where the black character is economically better off than the white character and is therefore the dispenser of charity. I would argue that the paradigm shift necessary to realise this transfer of power in literature is yet to be realised.

Candy is aware that the introduction of money into her relationship with Becky will diminish the very foundation of their friendship, and so from the outset her desire to be friends with Becky is tainted by a combination of guilt and a desire to help her materially. Jones tells us that

Candy knew Becky didn't mean to, but she made her feel so guilty. Guilty for being white. But what could she do? How could she help Becky materially, without incurring a need for gratitude and thus spoiling the sense of equality on which their friendship was founded? Suddenly, it just didn't seem possible that she and Becky would be able to continue relating as equals when everything between them was so unequal (60).

This awareness of inequality stems not only from the glaring material differences, but also from the fact of their race. This assertion is further enhanced by the unequal treatment the two characters receive at the hands of the author. We are never shown Becky's home or family, nor do we ever know how Becky thinks and feels about anything; if she is not expressing herself directly neither her thoughts nor emotions are ever revealed. The textual representational inequality of the two girls is one of the weakest elements of this book and feeds into the notion of white superiority, because no matter how difficult the experience of the friendship might be for Candy its impact on Becky can only be imagined. The author gives pre-eminence and priority to Candy with Becky becoming a functional catalyst for the various experiences that Candy has because of the relationship.

This suggestion is affirmed in the scene where the girls are approached by two soldiers who proceed to humiliate Becky. Candy's refusal to respond to the soldier in Afrikaans distances her from the apartheid system and its racism. However, what is most fascinating about this scene is the fact that all we ever learn is Candy's reaction to what is essentially Becky's humiliation and abuse at the hands of the soldiers. Although Becky is the primary target of the soldier's abuse, Candy internalises that experience and turns it in on herself, to the complete exclusion of the impact of the experience on Becky. Becky functions here as a prop to enable Candy to experience such an encounter, for it would not have happened to her had she been on her own. She feels like "an outlaw, vulnerable and exposed ... humiliated and afraid" (56) and yet there is little justification for the encounter to have provoked such a strong reaction. Even

she realises that her own experience with the soldiers does not merit her reaction in comparison to Becky who was the primary target of the soldiers. “Becky was the one who had actually been humiliated, and here she was, so obsessed with her own reactions she hadn’t spared a single thought for Becky’s feelings” (57). With this statement the author acknowledges the fact that the experience of apartheid is essentially a black experience regardless of its impact on the white population and yet does nothing to reveal the impact of it on the black character.

However, the rest of the novel does not reflect this authorial awareness and continues to filter Becky’s experiences through Candy and their impact on her. Jones does not rectify this anomaly by telling us how Becky feels about the encounter instead she laughs about it and mocks the soldiers which the author tells us “helped Becky to remain human under an inhuman system; seeing the funny side in her own suffering was both her salvation and her strength” (58). However, the scene that plays out of Becky mocking not just the police, but herself, is grotesque and undermines the undoubted trauma of her encounter. In an attempt to make Becky appear strong enough to laugh at her ordeal the author only succeeds in undermining the experience of discrimination suffered by black people under apartheid. There is no fear, anger or indignation; rather Becky puts on a bizarre comedy of the encounter only moments after it has happened as though being threatened by soldiers and publicly humiliated were a trifling matter.

Another instance where Becky is portrayed as giving a similar comedic flair to an encounter with the police occurs later in the novel when Becky tells Candy that during a police raid on her home when she was little she bit a police officer on the buttocks (75-77). This is another experience that Becky has with the police which is depicted as jocular and which Becky herself laughs about. There is indeed a comical element to this particular incident but that is all that is mentioned or focused on, to the exclusion of the terror, the insecurity and the violation of Becky’s home in the dead of night. Again this kind of depiction of black abuse at the hands of the police completely diminishes the severity of the incidents by turning them into amusing little anecdotes to simultaneously educate and entertain Candy. More importantly, it reflects the unequal nature of the relationship. The author spends considerable

time in careful consideration of Candy's emotional response to all aspects of her relationship with Becky, trivial or otherwise, but gives only glancing reference to Becky's emotional response to apartheid and its attendant abuse.

5.2.2 The White Girl's Burden

As the novel progresses and the sacrifices required of Candy in order to sustain her friendship with Becky mount, Candy's perception of Becky begins to shift from that of friend to burden. She begins to feel that "her friendship with Becky was forcing a form of apartheid in her personal life" (101). It forces her to choose between Becky and interacting in a social capacity with other white people. However, the equating of apartheid with Candy's restricted social life belittles the suffering that black people were forced to endure under apartheid. Candy's statement undermines the black experience of apartheid by placing it on par with her struggle to decide whom to invite to her birthday party. There is a clear suggestion that Candy holds Becky somehow responsible for her restricted social life. This suggestion is made apparent in the narrator listing the things that Candy has had to sacrifice in order to be with Becky. No mention is made of the sacrifices Becky makes or the very real risks that Becky takes every time she gets on the bus to visit Candy or indeed the impact of their friendship on Becky's social life with her racial peers.

However, the sense of the two girls' social apartheid is reflected in Jones' use of the space inhabited by the girls throughout the novel. In the first part of the novel all interaction between the girls takes place in Candy's bedroom reflecting not only the secret nature of the friendship, but also its confining and restrictive nature, which in turn reflects the repressive society in which they live. In addition, the girls only interact with each other, thus further enhancing their isolation from the rest of society. In the second part of the novel when Becky re-enters Candy's life after the 1976 riots the anticipated freedom that will result is reflected in the spaces in which the girls interact. They are depicted as interacting not only outside of Candy's room but her home as well and their interactions are no longer exclusive but include other people. The novel's closing scene of Candy and Becky driving out of Candy's parents' home on their way to Swaziland reflects the expanding circle of public engagement between the two

girls and also foretells the anticipated future in which travelling publicly as friends will be possible.

The portrayal of Becky as a burden on Candy is carried over into the instance where Becky tells Candy that she was raped on the way to Candy's house. Candy is traumatised by this news but she responds to it with respect to how this knowledge affects her and feels herself burdened further by Becky and their friendship: "the weight of knowing was too great" (110) and by the end of the conversation she "really just wanted Becky gone" (111) ending the relationship at the same time. This change in Candy's perception of Becky is another instance that serves to demonstrate the functionality of Becky's character in this novel; she continues to supply Candy with emotional fodder but has, at this point, outlived her usefulness. Having provided Candy and the reader with information on apartheid and its effect on black lives, but more importantly, having opened up self-reflexive avenues for Candy, Becky is discarded by both Candy and Jones.

Becky's continued presence would have prevented Candy from having other experiences and so she is excluded from the story. In Becky's absence, Candy meets Dirk, with whom she has a romance. Implied in this is that Becky was an impediment to Candy's realisation of other aspects of her life, because of the exclusive and secret nature of their friendship Candy's circle of association was greatly diminished and so too her chances of finding romance. It is possible that the author uses this turn in the narrative to foreground Candy's selfishness and at the same time force the implied white reader to question how they themselves would respond in such a situation.

Becky's ignominious exit from Candy's life is only surpassed by her re-entry into it and further perpetuates the notion of Becky as a burden. Although the circumstances and conditions under which the relationship is resumed are framed in such a way as to negate Candy's sense of being burdened Becky is presented as needy and subsequently dependent on Candy and her parents. Becky's reappearance in the novel casts her in the classic mould of the stereotype of black dependence on white largesse. She returns to borrow money from Candy, but in addition to this loan Candy's parents offer to pay for her education. Becky, like most

black characters, is merely the catalyst for the white characters' emotions, and her fate lies in the hands and the generosity of the white characters who provide material security for the black character to sustain a moderately dignified existence.

Inggs (2002: 24) notes that these characters also provide emotional support for the white characters whose empowerment comes at the expense of the black character who is simultaneously disempowered. Characters such as Mponyana in *Cageful of Butterflies* (Lesley Beake 1989); Joe, Anna, Siphso and the sangoma in *Spirit of the Mountain* (Shelley Davidow 1996); Sam in *The Kayaboties* (Elena Bregin 1989); Johannes in *Pig* (Paul Geraghty 1988); Joseph in *Dream Chariot* (Barrie Hough 1993); Solomon in *Homeward Bound* (Lawrence Bransby 1990) Nkululeko in *The Red Haired Khumalo* (Elana Bregin 1994); and Tendai and Grace in *The White Giraffe* (Lauren St. John 2006) are all examples of black characters whose role is to provide emotional strength and support to the white protagonist or to be the catalyst for healing, change or self-actualisation.

5.2.3 The Shadow in the House

Although Tom, the housekeeper of the family, is not a major character, the way in which he is presented is another means by which we are able to assess Jones' representation of blackness. Tom's portrayal suggests a schizophrenia in the way the author views blackness, which is reinforced by her depiction of blacks within the political arena which is discussed in detail later in the chapter. In chapter 3 I discussed the ways in which black servants in particular are portrayed as stereotypes, one example of which was Tom's character. Tom is not pivotal to the main plot and therefore does not receive the amount of authorial attention that is afforded Becky, which makes it easier for him to slip more readily into a stereotype.

Jones attempts to portray the relationship between Tom and Candy as one based on mutual regard but again this presentation belies the realities of the relationship. Candy appears to be familiar with only the barest details of Tom's life despite having known him all her life, and although Candy does have affection for Tom it is only as a result of her meeting with Becky that she is made more aware of him as an individual. What is most striking about the

relationship between them is the fact that it resembles engagements between an adult and a child, with Tom as the child.

This portrayal of Tom in the novel is disquietingly patronising. While the servant stereotype has been discussed in chapter 3, the facet of Tom's character that has not been previously mentioned is that of likening him to a child. Jones describes Tom in terms reminiscent of the colonial depiction of black people as children. We are told that:

[h]e was almost illiterate, his knowledge was *extremely* limited. And yet, in his own simple way he was surprisingly wise, and he had a basic integrity that seemed incorruptible. She had sometimes noted a childlike quality in his expression, and now she suddenly realised why. *In one sense he was a child.* Not the child she remembered herself to have been - devious and manipulative - but *a child of the Bible and moral fables*: uncomplicated, undefiled, with a simple innocence derived from living in harmony with some natural law of right and wrong. But in every other sense he was a man, worthy of her respect and admiration (*emphasis added*) (46)

The author equates literacy with knowledge, implying therefore that his illiteracy makes his 'extremely limited' knowledge more understandable. The reader has no way of knowing exactly what this knowledge is that Tom lacks. That there are innumerable ways of knowing is disregarded and inherent in this statement is the implication that because Tom does not necessarily know the things that Candy and her family know and consider valuable he therefore has little or no knowledge at all. This characterisation of Tom feeds into Becky's later fears in the novel of illiterate uneducated people being allowed to vote and choose the country's leadership.

The subsequent comparison of Tom with a child is reminiscent of colonial attitude towards, and perceptions of, natives who were considered too childlike to be entrusted with their own affairs and thus needed the colonial machinery to protect them. As though realising the political incorrectness of describing a grown man as a child Candy attempts to recover from her *faux pas* by adding that Tom is only a figurative spiritual child but the patronising tone in the description is inescapable. The very fact that Candy has to consciously revise her perception of Tom suggests authorial awareness of the deeply rooted perceptions of black

people within the white psyche and represents the internal struggle that both Candy and the reader will need to undergo in order to change these perceptions. Tom, like Becky, serves merely as a vehicle to illustrate Candy's liberal and accepting nature.

Like most white South African writers of youth novels Jones skirts around the unequal nature of the relationship between Tom and Candy. Even when Candy hesitatingly admits to not having treated Tom like a man, we are not given a full understanding of what it is she has done, and we never get to hear how Tom truly feels. Instead Tom is portrayed in a similar way to his literary namesake, Uncle Tom² whose devotion and loyalty to the family defies belief, and this portrayal, it could be argued is indicative of Jones' perceptions of the black servant. Tom is not only 'infantilised' by repeated references to his simplicity, but also by the fact that he is intellectually juxtaposed with Candy who is presented as being more intelligent and mature. For example Tom has an inexplicable hole in his head which he does nothing about and it is Candy who repeatedly advises him to seek medical attention. The exchange between them with regard to this hole reinforces the notion of Tom as a child needing to be looked after, and of Candy as the mature responsible parent figure looking after a child.

Tom's intellectual inferiority is also implied in the way he speaks, especially the solecisms in his speech. For example, he asks Candy: "When are you going to bring a nice friendboy to the house so I can make a plenty-too-much-special supper for him?" (97). Jones is attempting to give what she imagines to be an accurate portrayal of how a black servant might speak, but fails in the attempt because idiomatic idiosyncrasies are difficult to capture on paper especially when the writer does not speak in that way. Language was one of the most powerful tools in the apartheid armoury, it was the primary means according to which people were divided into different linguistic groups, which were also referred to as tribes.

This assertion is averred by Kogila Moodley and Heribert Adam (2000: 51 citing Adam and Moodley) who state that "Verwoerdian demographic engineering was designed to ethnicize, denationalize and fragment the black majority, but to racialize and thereby unify the white

² *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe about a slave named Uncle Tom whose devotion, affection and willingness to forgive his enslavers has resulted in the disparaging use of his name with reference to black people who are considered white sycophants.

minority of different ethnic backgrounds”. Butler (2004) and Nigel Gibson (1988) also note that despite the fact that the Afrikaners were in power from 1948 English became South Africa’s *lingua franca* and as such has become the language of political and economic power. This continues to be true of post-apartheid South Africa where Afrikaans is not only historically tainted and competing for preferred minority language status with all the other marginalised indigenous languages, but must also compete with the global reach of the English language for the coveted title of *lingua poeir*.

Inggs (2004) points out that the link between language and power is an extremely significant feature in South African youth literature. In many of these books the ability to speak English is equated with power, status and education whereas those characters whose English is less fluent or ‘correct’ are disempowered. She goes on to add that the issue of language and the barrier it creates within South African society is seldom tackled in South African youth literature; characters are all made to speak English and the type of English used is the only acknowledgment of linguistic differences.

Stephens (1992) adds that in instances where the narrative is in standard English but the conversation includes a dialect or idiomatic register that is specific to a particular group, the effect is to make standard English the majority culture because it is represented through the dominant subject position within the text. At the same time it ‘others’ the speakers of the dialect and so places them outside the dominant culture. This is especially true of South African literature where the grammar or pronunciation of the English spoken by the black characters is incorrect in order to reflect the ways in which black people are perceived to speak. However, within the South African context the effect of this is not only to mark the speaker as black but also to place them within a particular social group or class. In a society where English is the *lingua poeir* and defines speakers in terms of class and education, the impact of the use of broken English by black characters in these books is to emphasize what is considered their inferior status in society.

In a similar discussion on language and its use in reflecting power dynamics Wade (1993) notes that there are various ways in which writers present direct speech among the black

characters in their books. Some opt for a very formal English, others settle for more colloquial English making their black characters speak the same version of English as their white counterparts, and finally there are those who, through spelling, grammar and sentence construction, attempt to capture not only the speech patterns of black speakers of the English language, but the accent as well. The effect of the attempt at capturing the accent is often to create the impression that the character is either poorly educated or of less than average intelligence because the vocal register often fails to translate adequately into the written.

Wade goes on to add that because white writers belong to the power structure, however marginally they choose to be associated with it, their efforts to represent direct speech among their black characters is informed by the discourses of that structure. In an attempt to bridge the gulf that exists between the white writer and the black character, the writer compels the character to enter into the oppressive discourse of the ruling class. The result is the depiction of black characters that white readers still see as the other and that black readers will not recognise as themselves.

What is not clear from Wade's line of argument is what alternative the writer has. If a white writer is writing in English how do they make their characters sound 'black' without reverting to solecisms and bad spelling? It is outside of the scope of this thesis to carry out an in depth study of the issues relating to language but it is vitally important that we interrogate the notion of 'sounding black'. What is meant by this phrase within a South African context where there cannot be said to be a Creole or pidgin English? The accents of various language groups when speaking English may differ but all speak a standard variety of English. Without getting submerged into a debate around the politics of accents and command of language the question remains, in a nation where there is only standard English how does a writer make their black characters 'sound black'³?

Tom is a very typical black servant character, and because it helps in establishing the portrayal of the main white character he is given greater scope than most servants in these novels. But

³ For an engaging discussion on what is referred to as Black South African English (BSAE) see Vivian de Klerk and David Gough (2002).

as already mentioned his role is purely functional, providing another means by which the author is better able to develop the character of Candy. Tom is indeed one of “the nameless ones, these servants: impersonal shadows who moved back and forth behind the white foreground, doing all the chores essential to keeping the household running smoothly” (Jones 1976: 28).

5.2.4 The Fear of Black Power

Although at the onset of the novel Candy is convinced of the inherent equality of the friendship between herself and Becky because it is based on mutual affection, Candy is eventually forced to admit that this is untrue. Becky is unequal to Candy, authorially, economically and politically, and although the first two are not important to Candy the third affects her greatly because she realises that she can no longer “fool herself into believing that Becky could ever be truly equal until she had the vote” (98). Of course Candy is afraid of the implications of giving Becky, and by extension the black majority, the vote. The student riots of 1976 bring Candy’s fears of a black government ever closer to reality. Jones’s presentation of the student riots of 1976 reflects the author’s support of the students and the motives for the riots, while at the same time expressing unequivocal disapproval of the apartheid government. In explaining the riot to Candy her mother tells her that the Soweto students have been on strike for a month over this “ridiculous Afrikaans business” (124). The authorial voice is clearly discernible when she states:

If only we could get rid of this blasted government ... before it is too late. Sometimes I fear it’s too late already. I mean, when young people - mere children - start to...’ She shook her head in despair. You can hardly blame the poor little blighters for going on strike. Why should they be forced to learn in Afrikaans? (124)

Malan (1995) notes that there is a general tendency among white writers to present collective action among blacks as a negative thing and therefore to portray it as dangerous and futile. However, this is not the case with this particular novel, which attempts to provide the reader with the reasons behind the riots. Whilst a black perspective on the riots would no doubt have furthered the novelist’s effort she stands out among many other writers in the way the struggle

is portrayed as suggested by Malan. In *Day of the Kugel* (Ludman 1989) the Soweto riots are depicted as futile and the struggle is undermined by Joe's betrayal and Clive's repeated denigration of it. The other way in which the black struggle is undermined in youth novels is its associative portrayal with or as "black on black" violence. Novels such as *Into the Valley* by Michael Williams (1990) and *The Boy Who Counted to a Million* by Lawrence Bransby (1995) only portray the struggle as black on black violence, and this is a characteristic that is also found in *Cry Softly Thule Nene* by Shirley Bojé (1992) which is looked at in greater detail in this chapter.

Candy's feelings about potential black rule reflect her and the author's conflicting feelings about black people. While able to see the impact of apartheid on Becky and realising that Becky's emancipation is contingent on her access to the same rights that she enjoys, she does not want a black government for fear of how that will impact on her freedom. Candy's concerns are typical of those prevalent among white South Africans after the 1994 elections with regard to the impact of a black government on their freedom and privileges. This fear of a black government was instilled in the white population by the apartheid government through their propaganda machinery. Fears of the 'swart gevaar' (translated into English as the 'black threat') and communism were infused into the white psyche resulting in the fears that Candy expresses. By placing sufficient fear of a black government into the hearts and minds of the white population the government was able to significantly curtail any potential support the liberation movement might have garnered from the white population. Candy's fears are typical of those harboured by many white people all over South Africa at the time, who, though recognising the tyranny of apartheid, were unwilling to sacrifice not just their freedom but their privileges for an equitable society.

The attitudinal inconsistencies that the reader observes in Candy are similar to the authorial inconsistencies that can be observed within this novel. Jones, though acknowledging that there are impediments to an equal relationship between Candy and Becky, gives clear indications that she does not consider race to be one of them. Yet there is implied in the text a tacit acceptance of white superiority and black subordination. This occurs in two instances in the text. The first is the scene where Becky goes to thank Candy's father for the financial

assistance they are giving her. We are told that she looks him straight in the eye “in friendly defiance of white status and authority” (162).

Jones assumes that the reader shares her acceptance of the status and authority that adheres to whiteness, which she takes for granted that blacks also recognise and accept. The suggestion is that Becky also recognises this status and authority only she defies it. Implied in this scene is that there is a natural status and authority that is commanded by white people which black people recognise but occasionally defy as is exemplified by Becky. There is no question as to the authority and status commanded by Candy’s father because he is white. The point of interest that the author is emphasising is Becky’s response to that status and authority. In an effort to portray Becky’s newfound confidence Jones succeeds only in depicting her as potentially threatening.

The second instance of this authorial inconsistency occurs when Becky is explaining to Candy that to her education is so important that she is even willing to settle for the substandard education that is Bantu education. She says:

It's no use fighting for your freedom if you don't know how to use it constructively and wisely when you get it. ... Too many people still can't think for themselves. How can they choose the right leaders when they can't even read and write. They need to be educated about a lot of things (163)

Whilst there is no question of the value of a formal education it is inappropriate to suggest that people without formal education are incapable of thinking or choosing the right leaders, as though the ability to read and write confers on one the miraculous power of being able to accurately judge people. Implied in this statement is the suggestion that black people, even if they were allowed to vote, would vote for the wrong people because of their lack of education. Becky’s assertions are intended to suggest that black people were just not ready to be given the vote and by extension of that logic not ready to run the country because the majority of the black population was largely uneducated and according to this logic susceptible to making the wrong leadership choice. This would of course delay the realisation of a black government because of the length of time it would take to educate the entire black population.

This causal relationship between education and correct voter choice is not substantiated by history anywhere in the world, and certainly not South Africa's history where from 1948 until 1994 an educated white population voted for a succession of right wing governments whose main policy feature was the oppression and subjugation of the black majority. The fact that Becky is the one to convey this controversial notion seems aimed at lending credence to this assertion and by implication appears to illustrate that even black people realised that they were just not ready to vote or to rule.

5.3 Silencing the Other in *Cageful of Butterflies* by L. Beake (1989)

This novel is set in rural KwaZulu Natal and while there is no clear temporal indication it is largely irrelevant to the story. Considering the political situation that dominated South Africa at the time of publication this novel is devoid of any political references. MacCann and Maddy (2001) point out that this book is written in a political and social vacuum and this is what makes locating it temporally difficult. The author has excluded all social and political references in her story, but this is not unusual for books written in the 1980s.⁴ What is unusual is the absence of a temporal locator in a novel not set in the future or in the distant past.

The story is told in the third person but the writer interchanges the focalisers of the story at various intervals between Mponyana and Kra⁵ enabling the reader to see the unfolding story from two different perspectives. This is an uncommon feature for a youth novel because most novels give a single point of view. Mponyana is the main character in the story and although the focaliser changes intermittently he is the primary focaliser. The fact that Kra is the alternate focaliser is also an unusual feature because firstly she is not a primary character in the story and secondly because she is an adult. Adult focalisers are uncommon in youth novels

⁴ Other youth novels written in the 1980s that do not feature politics include *Child in Darkness* by R. Hill (1985); *Love David* by Dianne Case (1986); *The Kayaboeties* by Elena Bregin (1989); *Shadow of the Wild Hare* by M. Poland (1986); *Down Street* by L. Bransby (1989); *Warrior of Wilderness* by Elena Bregin (1989); *When Wales go Free* by Dianne Hofmeyer, (1988); *The Strollers* by Lesley Beake (1987); *Pig* by Paul Geraghty 1988 *Leopard Boy* by Peter Slingsby (1989), *Black Sheep* by Maretha Maartens (1988).

⁵ Mponyana and the rest of the characters are based on real people and although the main story is fictional the way Mponyana comes to live with the family and the relationship between Mubi and the family are also based on fact (Private correspondence with the author).

where the focaliser, in most instances, is a teenager, someone the target audience is able to identify with. The choice of Frank would have been more understandable not only because he is the other primary character in the novel with Mponyana but also because as a young person he is likely to resonate more with the implied reader. Both Kra and Mponyana are a surprising choice because they are not characters that young white readers would readily relate to, thus leading the reader to an estranged subject position.

Stephens (1992: 70) points out that a reader can become estranged from a text through a number of ways and in the process of this estrangement the reader is unable to identify with the focaliser or narrator and therefore cannot adopt a single subject position. The ways in which this estrangement can occur include:

shifts in focalizer; focalizers who are not ‘nice people’, and hence do not invite reader identification; multi-stranded narration, which may play one significance against another; intertextual allusiveness, which may indicate the presence of more than one interpretative frame and require top-down reading; metafictional playfulness, whereby a text draws attention to its own status and processes as a fiction; and overtly inscribed indeterminacies.

In this novel there are two features that have the potential to lead to an estranged subject position, the shift in focaliser and the multi-stranded narration.

What is also intriguing about the way in which Beake has written this novel is the fact that Mponyana focalises visually in terms of what he sees; we are told very little of what he feels and nothing of what he thinks because “in his mind there were shapes for things that only he knew how to use” (9), thus rendering his mind and therefore his thoughts inaccessible even to the narrator. Kra, on the other hand, focalises verbally in that the writer takes us directly into her thought processes without filtering them through a narrator. Mponyana is deaf and mute and his means of focalising is consistent with his way of interacting with the world. However, this approach silences him completely as we are only aware of what he sees and some feelings through the narrator but we are never given the benefit of his own voice on any level.

5.3.1 Sacrificing the Other

From the very onset of the relationship between Mponyana and Frank their respective roles are established through the narrator. Mponyana is to be Frank's "umtalaan⁶, his closest person ... [Mponyana] must stay here and look after this boy and care for him always. This was to be his work. Baba had shown him this and Mponyana was proud that he was to have such a great responsibility" (4). The fact that Mponyana is only 12 years old and therefore still a child himself suddenly burdened with so huge a responsibility goes unnoticed. This is an inversion of the classic black function in white households of the black adult looking after white children while their own are left to fend for themselves. In this instance Mponyana is brought by his grandfather Mubi to look after a white child whose needs are presented as taking priority over those of the old man and Mponyana himself.

There is never any question as to whether this is the best thing for Mponyana or indeed how such a huge responsibility might affect him not only because of his age, but his disability also. It is suggested that he has been brought to Kra because his grandfather is too old to look after him, but one could argue that if Mponyana is considered old enough to look after a 6 year old boy he is old enough to look after his grandfather who is not incapacitated. But we are told that Mponyana is to remain with this family in order for him to learn things which are "[m]ore important than the happiness in his heart of his own place" (6) but this claim also proves to be untrue as Mponyana learns nothing at all. A hierarchy is established from the very beginning in the way that Mponyana comes into the family. This understanding of his role and function within the family and this established relationship sets the tone for Mponyana's conduct relative to Frank for the rest of the novel.

Implied in this statement is the insignificance of Mponyana's happiness which he must sacrifice in order to ensure that of the white child. Beake does not problematise this expectation but instead presents it as the norm. The fact that black children in South Africa have had their happiness sacrificed for the benefit of white children through the loss of their

⁶ This is a traditional Zulu practice wherein an older boy is allocated to a younger one to look after. The circumstances under which such an arrangement is made are unclear but it used to be a fairly common practice (Private correspondence with the author).

parents in white service is unacknowledged by the author. The reader would be justified in asking whether indeed the author would have presented this scenario in an unproblematic manner if Mponyana were a white child being given to a black family in this fashion.

The extent to which black lives are readily accessible for white benefit is nowhere better illustrated than in the fact that prior to the arrival of Mponyana to help Kra with Frank, his mother Maina was also brought to Kra to help her with Frank and Cicely, leaving behind her own 6 year old deaf mute child in the care of her father-in-law. This is a typical scenario in novels that portray black/white relationships, which is now being inverted in the instance of Mponyana. Beake's diegesis portrays black people as mere functionaries in the white world; both Maina and Mponyana's sole purpose in this relationship is to ease the burdens of Kra and her family. Nowhere is it suggested that they are driven to this by economic need because on both occasions they are brought by Mubi for the express purpose of helping Kra. Black complicity in the perpetuation of the 'labourisation' of the black populace is implied by the fact that Mubi brings both Mponyana and Maina to work for Kra without her soliciting them, and with no suggestion of remuneration. Stephen Small (1999: 55) cites Wong's observations with regard to images of black people especially in cinema and notes that:

Blacks in particular, and people of colour generally, are cast in roles as caregivers, nurturers looking after and assisting white families. ... there is a common underlying purpose in such images – they serve “to allay racial anxieties; those who fear the erosion of their dominance and the vengeance of the oppressed can exorcise their dread in displaced forms” (Wong as cited by Small).

The way that both Mponyana and Kra see Mponyana's function in the family is solely in terms of the benefits that have accrued to Frank through his presence. Kra is cognisant of the changes that Mponyana has brought into their lives and admits that they have benefited more from him than he has from them. There is never a point at which Kra questions her entitlement to these sacrifices made for her and her family or the propriety of the situation. Kra's response to the situation is not to wonder if Mponyana is not too young for such responsibility but merely to wonder what will happen to Mponyana when Frank starts school. The sense of entitlement to black labour and sacrifices that are taken for granted in white South Africa permeate the sub-text of this entire novel.

Beake attempts to establish a foundation on which Kra's situation with Mponyana and Mubi appears less exploitative by locating the entire enterprise in the realm of friendship. There is a pre-existing relationship between the two families, which is intended to justify this scenario, and the subsequent friendship that develops between the two boys also serves to normalise the situation and nullify the child labour aspect of the relationship and the questionability of the arrangement. In having Mubi bring Mponyana to Kra unsolicited and "force" the boy onto her Beake is clearly attempting to absolve Kra of any responsibility for Mponyana's presence and function in their household, but what it also does is make blacks complicit in their own exploitation. Indeed her taking Mponyana on is initially presented as a sacrifice on her part as she can ill afford another mouth to feed in her house. This again feeds into the perceptions of black people as being incapable of looking after themselves and requiring white beneficence to assist them. That this turns out not to be the case does not in any way diminish that initial perception that is suggested by Kra's first reaction to Mponyana. What is also curious about this relationship is the fact that Kra, despite having herself lived with Mubi, is reluctant to extend the same generosity to him when she imagines him to be in need of assistance.

Beake does not problematise this morally questionable scenario she presents us with, and in failing to question it she normalises black families' sacrifices of parents or children for the benefit of white families. There is nothing in the story to indicate that before falling on hard times Kra had looked after Mponyana's family as they had looked after her, there is no reciprocity and these continual stereotyped portrayals of black/white relationships regularise the unquestioned labourisation of blackness. Magubane (2006: 2) points out that apartheid laws and taxes ensured that black people remained poor and thus a source of cheap reliable labour and it is this perception of black people as labour that is perpetuated in this novel. Although this novel is factually based there is still no interrogation of the appropriateness of Mponyana's situation or the entitlement of the white family to his labour.

The sacrifice that is made for Kra's benefit is also made by Mubi in giving up his grandson as he gave up his daughter-in-law to help Kra, prioritising her needs above theirs. Mponyana is the only family that Mubi has left and the expectation would be that Mponyana will help his

grandfather in his dotage, however he is left to fend for himself in the village where the only people remaining “were only the people who weren’t living somewhere else. The left-overs.” (93). Mubi, now living alone, is responsible for “tending his small mealie patch. Women’s work, but there were no women left in his family. ... But water still had to be carried from the tap ... and the caterpillars and bugs still has to be removed along with the weeds” (69-70). All of these are things that Mponyana would naturally have done had he remained at home. Even as she outlines the extent of Mubi’s sacrifice and the desolation of his solitary existence there seems little cognisance of the magnitude of his sacrifice which is typical of sacrifices that have been made by black workers in South Africa for generations for white families who, like Kra, take it as their due.

Mponyana’s function in this family is to look after Frank, but he also serves to foreground the problems being experienced by Kra’s family, which are made to seem far more significant than those of Mponyana’s family. Whilst it is true that Kra is in dire financial straits, with a husband in jail and living in a hostile community, she still has the option of seeking financial assistance from her father-in-law. Mponyana, on the other hand, is an orphan whose only remaining relative is his grandfather; he is an uneducated, poor, deaf mute black boy living in a rural area with very few options. In comparison to Mponyana’s situation Kra’s issues not only pale into insignificance, but by the end of the novel are all neatly resolved whereas Mponyana is dead and Mubi is left without family.

The prominence of white issues is nowhere made more obvious than in the fact that when Mponyana dies at the end of the novel it is the white family’s loss of Mponyana that is mentioned; how Mubi copes with the news of the loss of his grandson we are not told. It seems that the only loss that Beake deems worthy of mention is that of the white family. This however is consistent with the discarding of black characters when they are no longer useful. Mubi has provided the family with the services of his daughter-in-law and later his grandson at their hour of greatest need, the implication therefore is that he has served his purpose and little else about him remains of interest either to the writer or the reader.

5.3.2 The Black at the Back: Establishing White Authority

Whilst Beake makes every effort to demonstrate the affection that exists between the two boys and the fact that this is indeed a friendship among equals, she continually undermines her own efforts by portraying Frank as the leader and Mponyana as the disciple. There is the sense that Beake is attempting to reaffirm white authority in the relationship between the two characters, as though the affection between Mponyana and Frank that she is portraying might in some way undermine pre-existing white authority in such a situation. This is a feature of South African writing that has also been noted by Inggs (2000: 23) who states that “before the 1990s, the majority of works portrayed white protagonists in positions of power over members of other races”. The fact that Mponyana is twice Frank’s age and would be the more natural leader is discounted in favour of the repeated affirmation of Frank’s primacy. The very fact that it is mentioned more than once suggests a need to remind the reader of Frank’s leadership as though playing with a black child might in some way diminish his natural authority.

What this constant mention of Frank as the leader does is to not only naturalise white leadership, but black subordination as well. Placing Mponyana behind Frank, except when there is danger, enhances the perception of blacks as white minions. The role that has been established for Mponyana in his relationship with Frank already identifies him as little more than Frank’s personal servant and placing Frank at the helm serves merely to affirm that perception. It is an uncommon occurrence in a novel for the person in the lead to be mentioned as often as happens in this novel when it serves no narrative function. What this does, of course, is to dispel the notion of a real friendship existing between the two boys.

In various scenes in which the boys are playing the author informs us that Frank is in the lead. On page 26 we are told that “Frank led the way as he always did”. Again on page 34 while playing at being Zulu impis they did so “with Fan⁷ in the lead”. Having gone back to Mponyana’s village with him Frank is introduced to Mponyana’s contemporaries who play with him and teach him more stick fighting tactics. After this encounter Frank decides that

⁷ This is the name that Mponyana calls Frank in his head because he is deaf and therefore not able to hear the correct pronunciation.

once he has learnt everything the boys have to teach him, he will “take them back with him and he would be in the lead” (68) in an attack on the hostel where Koos, the boy who is bullying him, lives. The only instance that Mponyana is in the lead is when they are out playing at night and the reader is made to understand that the only reason Mponyana is in the lead is because it is at night and it might be dangerous for Frank to lead; “The farm was different at night. A very slim moon lit their way. Mponyana was in the lead” (40). Implied in this statement is the suggestion that should there be any danger it will befall Mponyana, consistent with his portrayal as dispensable.

There is a determined wilfulness in the repetition of Frank’s leadership role in his various engagements with black people. Beake seems intent on foregrounding the fact that although Frank plays with black children his status as a member of the superior race is ensured by the leadership role he invariably assumes in every instance. However, what is intriguing about this is not just the repeated mention of it, but the fact that Beake uses no term other than “lead”, whereas words such as “in front” or “ahead” which would have, arguably, been more appropriate, in conveying a different message to lead. Choosing the term “lead” in every instance reinforces the fact that it is Frank’s role as the leader that is being emphasised and not merely the fact that he is in front of Mponyana during one of their games. Mponyana is required to sacrifice his family, happiness and development to ensure that Frank is safe and happy and so the author constructs Mponyana’s entire existence to reflect the fact that it is merely an extension of Frank’s and locating Mponyana behind Frank both literally and figuratively serves to confirm this perception.

The subordinate role of black people in the history of South Africa has locked some white South African writers in an imaginative space that seems incapable of constructing blackness in ways different from the stereotypes that are repeatedly featured in these novels. For example in Peter Slingsby’s *The Joining* (1996) out of a group of children who wander into an alternate time that is inhabited by Bushmen, Jeremy, the white boy, ends up as the leader of not just the group, but also anointed as the future leader of the Bushmen as well. In Anne Harries’ *Sound of the Gora* (1980) Caroline, the white girl, is the one who takes charge of the expedition in following the sound of the Gora, while Sam in *The Kayaboties* (1989) allows his

actions to be determined in large part by the white children in the band. From these examples it seems that these writers are not able to construct black/white interactions that are not based on the premise of white hegemony; even as these interactions are presented as friendships they are invariably impeded by historical racial hierarchies that seem to preclude equal relationships.

5.3.3 Friends and Masters: The Nature of Interracial Friendships

Even as Beake presents Mponyana and Frank as friends there is an underlying sense that the relationship she portrays does not have the full sanction of the author who periodically undermines it with illustrations of the fact that this is not a relationship among equals. The previous discussion about the affirmation of Frank's leadership position is one case in point. An incident with Frank and his dogs is another example that makes it clear that this relationship is not of a friendship among equals. Although terrified of dogs and fearful that Frank's dogs will bite him, Mponyana "[r]eluctantly ... held out a hand. He knew they would bite him, but it was his duty to make friends with the animals of Fan" (23). This scene suggests a relationship more consistent with master/servant discourses than friendship. Mponyana feels himself duty bound to engage in dangerous acts because it is expected of him as Frank's *umtalaan*. Mponyana's duties and obligations to Frank reveal the unequal nature of the relationship.

The devotional anxiety that Mponyana feels towards Frank is the result of his predestined function in Frank's life and undermines the suggested friendship that Beake attempts to portray. The emphasis placed on Mponyana's role as Frank's guardian precludes the possibility of an equal friendship developing. In many ways Beake's comparison of Mponyana with the dogs is a more accurate representation of his function in Frank's life: "In a way they shared something those dogs and Mponyana because they both had charge of Fan. And they all loved him. Fan had been so lonely before" (38). This likening of Mponyana's relationship with Frank with that of the relationship between Frank and the dogs is emblematic of the nature of the relationship that exists between the two boys.

This image portrays Mponyana as Frank's lapdog; he is presented as possessing qualities similar to that of a dog in his unflinching devotion and unquestioning loyalty to Frank. What this comparison also does is to relegate Mponyana to the realm of the animal a comparison that the author does not find problematic or objectionable. There is the additional aspect of this dog simile that is consistent with Beake's persistent need to reiterate Frank's leadership role in the relationship: if Mponyana is like one of the dogs then Frank is the master and not a friend.

The racially charged political environment in which these relationships occur does not seem to inform the ways in which blacks regard and feel about white characters in these novels. When Mponyana is first brought to live with Kra's family he is anxious to meet Frank because "[w]hen he saw him he would know if this white boy would be his friend" (4). The relationship that emerges indicates that the friendship that Mponyana was hoping for has in fact taken place. However the reader is repeatedly reminded of the fact that though friendly relations exist between the two boys they are not friends and nowhere is this made more clear than in the scene when Mponyana and Frank run into other boys from Mponyana's village and during the exchange Frank is asked "this boy works for your people?" and his response is "Ja. He is my umtalaan" (63). This is a fascinating revelation as all along the reader is given the distinct impression that even if the writer does not, Mponyana and Frank certainly think of each other as friends. But when asked about his relationship with Mponyana Frank describes him as his servant even though there is no suggestion at any point that Mponyana is being remunerated in any way for looking after Frank.

This statement reveals the way that Mponyana and Frank see the relationship. Frank clearly sees it as a master/servant relationship and one can only draw the conclusion that Frank sees Mponyana as a servant because he is black; were he to have a similar relationship with a white boy it is unlikely that he would consider him a servant. Whether he regards Mponyana as a friend is irrelevant because he is his servant first and is thus identified to the outside world. Frank's perception of Mponyana as a servant is affirmed further by his telling the other boys that when he is older he will have a farm of his own and Mponyana will come and live in his house and help him. In this statement is revealed the very nature of South African race

relations, because even as the relationship is that of friends, the white character's dominance leads them to invariably see the black character as dependent and beholden to them. This is similar to the relationship in *Waiting for the Rain* (1989) where the white character informs the black character that when he owns the farm he can be his baas boy.

Implied in this statement is the assumption that Mponyana will continue to be a part of Frank's life well into his adulthood and at his disposal forever because he is Frank's "umtalaan". The concept of an "umtalaan" is one that I am not familiar with and therefore have no means of understanding the obligations and expectation that come with it, but it is clear from Mponyana's actions and understanding that he believes he is to give his very life over to Frank and this is precisely what Frank would seem to expect also. One is also left to wonder why in the novel there is no interrogation or explanation of how it happens that one child's life is sacrificed for another, because even as Mponyana dies to save Frank there is no question, in either Frank or Mponyana's mind that it could have been any other way.

As already mentioned, MacCann and Maddy (2001: 69) identify two types of representations of Africans in interracial friendships. The first is the "lost race" to be sacrificed and the second is the post-apartheid classmate or friend who enables the white character to attain some form of redemption. They are quite accurate in their assessment that the black characters appear to be content to die or sacrifice themselves for the benefit of the white characters. There are certain assumptions in the book that are indicative of the inherent assumptions of white superiority and entitlement. MacCann and Maddy (2001: 70) summarise the book as follows:

this novel is more than a tale of mutual Black/White helpfulness. It places a White community in contrast to an indigenous African community, and a White over Black hierarchy is assumed. A Black duty to serve is assumed. A displacement from one's ancestral lands is assumed. Authority, domination, ownership - these seem to belong to the White community as a natural right, whereas African villagers have complacently surrendered their lands and their autonomy.

The predominance of white issues in this book serve to further underscore the insignificance of the black characters, especially Mponyana who is merely a conduit for our greater appreciation of the problems of the white characters. The problems in his own life and home

remain a mystery to the reader, as if he has no existence outside of Frank and therefore whatever history he has is created only at the moment of his meeting Frank. Mponyana is much admired in the book for his nobility and his selflessness but this “benevolence is seen only within the imperialist tradition which creates token black saints, and then manipulates them to enhance the prospects of white characters” (MacCann and Maddy 2001: 71). Mponyana’s death in the novel is consistent with his life: he dies in the service of Frank and his death is another opportunity to highlight white suffering.

5.4 Saving the Other from Themselves in *Cry Softly Thule Nene* by S. Bojé (1992)

This novel is set in pre-independence South Africa and tells the story of Thule who is orphaned as a result of her village being attacked after which her brother dies in a revenge attack. She is taken to a mission and looked after by the nuns until the Wickhams invite her to move in with them and help to look after their disabled daughter Fay. Thule is the focaliser in this novel and the story is told from her perspective. Thule and Mponyana are the only black focalisers in the novels that are examined extensively in this thesis. This is a rags to riches story in the classic mould where a fairy godmother appears to reward the main character’s acts of selflessness, generosity and kindness towards others by granting them their wish. In Thule’s case these wishes are; gaining an education and winning the heart of Simon. This is not, however, a fairy tale it merely has some features that are commonly found in fairy tales.

Thule is indeed a very thoughtful and generous girl and is continually presented as exceptional so that when she is chosen to be the recipient of the generosity of the Wickhams we can understand why she was chosen. She helps to clean the mission and look after the younger children and babies, Sister Mary’s response to Thule’s help is to say “[y]ou’re a strange child, Thule Nene. There aren’t many like you” (24). Later we discover that she has become “nothing more than skin and bones” (33) because she gives half of her already meagre meals to the young children, thus fore-grounding her generosity of spirit and making her an exception and marking her as a worthy recipient of the Wickham’s generosity.

The Wickhams are indeed the modern day equivalent of fairy godmothers, from their strange quirky ways to their ability to make dreams come true. While making a donation to the mission Fay's mother Flo inquires about "an orphan girl who might want a chance to have a different life and also be a friend and helper to a girl her own age. Someone clever and kind ..." (48). Thule is the natural choice, fulfilling both of these requirements and proving once again that goodness and kindness are always rewarded. But, Thule also represents two stereotypes, the first being of the exceptional black and the second of black dependence requiring white assistance in escaping a life of poverty and white guidance in formulation a future.

5.4.1 Benevolent Whites in the Impending New South Africa

The Wickhams are generous and kind to Thule from the very beginning. They are the epitome of the benevolent whites that are found throughout the novel engaged in various altruistic acts for the benefit of the underprivileged blacks that are also to be found throughout the novel. Every white person in this novel is compassionate and charitable, even Fay, who is given to self-indulgent tantrums. The author presents every white character in a favourable light and whilst the black characters are not negatively presented, they are presented as in constant need of white assistance.

It is the suggestion of this thesis that there are two possible reasons for Bojé presenting every white person in this way. The first is that whites are commonly portrayed as being the generous dispensers of charity to underprivileged blacks and so she constructs her characters within established modes of white characterisation. The second is that as the first democratic elections approached and white fears of reprisal escalated there was a need to remind especially black readers that not all white people were willing participants in the apartheid project and that many of them went out of their way to assist blacks thus tempering much of the anticipated backlash against whites.

There are three distinct groups of whites that Bojé singles out as examples of white beneficence, all three represent specific sectors of the population, government, religion and

individual represented by the police, the nuns and the Wickhams respectively. Each of these examples of white generosity will be looked at separately to evaluate how Bojé uses them to enhance the portrayal of white people as being giving and caring towards needy blacks. This close examination of the white characters also suggests a great deal about the author's perceptions of blackness.

5.4.2 Humanising the Police

The police in apartheid South Africa were much reviled for the role they played in the oppression of black people and their brutal enforcement of the law. The perception of the police among the black populace was less than favourable, and they were regarded as more of a threat than protection. It is therefore unlikely that on seeing the police Thule's brother Nathi would declare "[i]t's the police. ... [w]e'll be safe now" (4). The intention is not only to depict the police as being community guardians, but an institution that even blacks feel protected by. Thule and her brother are a representation of the black community who, in this instance, are presented as having full confidence in the police and fear no threat from them, in the same way that James, the shop owner, has no fear of Lt. Cox, one of the soldiers in the area in *Into the Valley* (Michael Williams: 1990).

This portrayal of the police is inconsistent with the realities of police action and attitudes towards black people in South Africa. They themselves were perpetrators of violence and the arm of the government that enforced the repressive laws against black people, therefore a young black male in South Africa would not automatically think himself safe upon the arrival of the police. The role of the state in perpetrating violence against anti-apartheid activists is discussed by Michelle Slone, Debra Kaminer and Kevin Durrheim (2000). They look at the impact of state sponsored violence on the psyche of the youth in South Africa, both violence directed at the youth, and the general violence in the communities.

The anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa was actively supported, and often led, by black youth. It was met by chronic and extreme forms of state oppression resulting in persecution of black political activists and black communities, from which children were not exempt. Youth were detained without trial in large numbers and were tortured or physically abused by security forces. Additionally, a significant percentage

of all people killed as a result of police action were younger than 15 years of age (Slone et al. 2000: 469).

Slone et al. find that black male youths were especially susceptible to the negative effects of violence because they were more inclined to be politically active and more closely observed and targeted by the police. It therefore seems improbable that Nathi, a black male youth, would find solace in the appearance of the police.

The policeman is further humanised by the compassion he shows towards the children on realising that they come from the village that has been burnt down. We are told that the fear and shock in the children's eyes moved the policeman and "[h]e pitied them" (5). Worrying about the effect of seeing the dead and mutilated bodies lying all over the village he tells them "[y]ou kids shouldn't be here. It's not a nice thing to see" (5). We later meet the same policeman and he is so moved by the tragedy that has befallen the children that he agrees to let them bury their parents instead of taking them to the police morgue as is clearly happening with the rest of the bodies. He departs, telling the children he will "send some people to help" (7).

It is not the suggestion of this thesis that the entire South African police force prior to the 1994 elections was brutal and inhumane, but the portrayal of the police as being trusted by black communities flies in the face of the reality of the relationship between the police and the communities. There are a lot of similarities between this depiction of the police and the soldier portrayed in *Into the Valley* (1990) by Michael Williams, where the army is more concerned with ending the violence within the community than the residents themselves. In Williams' novel Lieutenant Cox is equally compassionate and sincere in his concern for the wellbeing of the local community. Bojé's officer is described as young, which might be a way of explaining his attitude, which is different to that of the old establishment and reflects the more tolerant ideas of a younger more enlightened force.

5.4.3 Angels in the Abyss

Whilst not all the nuns in this novel are white there is a clear emphasis on the goodness of one of the white ones, Sister Mary; all adjectives that describe her highlight her goodness and kindness; her smile is “kindly” (21), her blue eyes are “kind” (24) and she is “understanding” (42). Sister Mary is a representational figure, like the police officer, she too represents another facet of whiteness and its involvement in the black communities. We are made aware of the appalling conditions under which the children live and these are the same conditions that the nuns work in and the fact that they do so with very little help and without any form of remuneration magnifies the extent of their sacrifice. There is the sense that these sacrifices are even greater when made by a white person for the benefit of black people.

As mentioned, Sister Mary is not the only nun at the mission but she is the only one to whom attention is paid. The portrayal of Sister Mary is a sharp contrast to the image we have of Sister Anna, a black nun, and serves to amplify the image of Sister Mary as competent and able. We are told that during a fight among the children one of the girls is injured and because Sister Anna is failing to deal with the crisis Sister Mary is called for. On arriving on the scene Sister Anna is found looking at the injured girl, her “round black face creased with worry. Her eyes ... rolling up in her head at the sight of blood” (25). Sister Mary, aided by Thule, steps in and takes care of the girl. The purpose of this juxtaposition serves to elevate the already high impression of Sister Mary that the reader is presented with. It also adds to the impression of the selfless white nun stepping in to save a black child where even the black adult appears incapable of rendering the necessary assistance. This scene reinforces the portrayal of black adults as incapable of looking after their children. The orphanage is already teeming with black children whose parents are either dead or unable to look after them and the only black adult in their midst fails in the simple task of stopping a fight and administering first aid.

The reader is not the only one who is cognisant of Sister Mary as an approachable giving individual. The children in the novel are clearly also aware of this, hence their rushing to sister Mary every time there is a crisis. In another incident where Thule is being beaten by one of the nuns, Winnie, one of the orphans, runs off to find Sister Mary in the middle of the night.

On entering Sister Mary's room Winnie is struck by how Sister Mary looks "like an angel all dressed in white, her long fair hair hanging down her back" (37). The simile of an angel is intended to concretise the portrayal of Sister Mary as being as angelic in not just her personality, but in her appearance as well. However, it is not just the fact that Sister Mary looks like an angel that is the point of emphasis, it is the fact that her long fair hair amplifies the image of her as a paragon of virtue. It is her whiteness that links her to celestial beings in addition to her deeds. Were the likeness to an angel made in the course of her administering assistance to one of the children the association would be with her deeds, but the link is specifically with her long fair hair which is a distinctly white feature thus equating whiteness with divinity.

Sister Mary is associated with a combination of positive features within the mission including but not limited to, the fact that the mission is now clean, the children are healthier and happier thanks to a donation that is made to the mission through her. So it is not surprising to learn that when Thule returns to the mission after the departure of Sister Mary the entire place has fallen into a state of unruly chaos and filth with rampant abuse and the children neglected and sickly. Winnie informs Thule and the reader that the mission has changed for the worse ever since Thule and Sister Mary left. As Sister Mary is a representational figure the implication is that in the absence of Whites Christian chaos will ensue, and with the immanent elections around the time of the publication of this novel this implication has the ominous tone of a warning to the nation.

5.4.4 The Wealthy White Philanthropists

The Wickhams are the most significant of the white representational figures in the novel as they display heightened levels of social awareness and generosity. Not only are they the most prominently featured of the white characters but their numerous donations and similar acts of philanthropy are constantly repeated to emphasise their generosity. In framing the Wickhams as representational white figures Boje "establish[es] whiteness as an arena not of engagement with anti-racism but of self-generated altruistic interest for "others" as well as for white people's own moral wellbeing" (Bonnett 1999:208). Their wealth and open handedness are

the two qualities that are repeatedly mentioned about them by the other characters “the Wickhams are very rich and you will be given the best of everything” (49) Sister Mary tells Thule by way of convincing her that she should go and live with the Wickhams. Constance the Wickhams’ maid tells Thule that “[y]ou must stay ... You are not like other girls. You will go far in life and these people are rich. They can help you if you help them” (59). Even Thule’s first impression of Bee Wickham is that she is a “strange, rich lady” (44).

The repeated mention of the Wickhams’ wealth and the various acts of charity not only reflect their extreme wealth and privilege, but it also spotlights the extreme poverty of the black characters. With the exception of Constance and Father Tomas the rest of the black characters are living in abject poverty, thus unintentionally foregrounding the benefits that accrued to the white population as a direct result of apartheid, which is never mentioned or interrogated throughout this novel. All the other black characters are reliant on the generosity of the white characters for their survival hence the deterioration of the mission when Sister Mary leaves. It is not clear why the Wickhams have withdrawn their support from the mission, which is another reason why it had begun to decline, but this associative link furthers the perception of black reliance on whites for their survival.

MacCann and Maddy (2001) note that white people are depicted in many of the apartheid texts as generous, noble, brave and kind, going out of their way to help black people. The black characters, on the other hand, are presented as grateful underlings to the white characters, thus reinforcing the stereotype of blacks as being incapable of looking after themselves and forever in need of white wisdom, guidance and generosity. The theme of black dependency on white largesse is a recurring feature within not just this novel but many other South African youth novels. Whether this largesse is in the form of cash or assistance in improving their lives, there is the persistent portrayal of blacks as relying on whites for their survival. The impression that the reader is left with is that black people require white assistance in order to overcome hardship or difficulty, an assertion that Inggs (2007) and Wade (1993) concur with.

For instance, Becky in *Go Well Stay Well*, is repeatedly receiving money and gifts from Candy and in the end is forced to resume her relationship with Candy in order to secure further funds from Candy and her parents. In S. Braude's *Mpo's Search* (1994), Mpo is assisted by Father Roger to get off the streets, avoid going to jail, get into school and find his father whom he has come to Johannesburg to find. Gabriel, in Bregin's *The Boy from the other Side* (1992), along with the rest of the community lives in the informal settlement and is saved from typhoid fever by Lora, the white character's father. As a result Gabriel ends up living with them because he is homeless and without family. In addition to taking Gabrielle into their home, Lora's family has already adopted Sparrow, a young black boy who does not speak because he witnessed his family being murdered. In Beake's other novel *The Strollers* (1987) the only adult character who looks out for the street children, occasionally giving them chocolate, is Mr Goldberg and when Johnny is arrested Mr Goldberg gets his friend Mr Fouche to represent Johnny gratis ensuring his acquittal. In Shelley Davidow's *Freefalling* (1991) Nontokozo is adopted by Shelley's family because her own mother abandoned her when she was fleeing the violence in the township.

From the outset Thule's success is based on the assumption that she will be assisted in realising it by the Wickhams, even as Thule is having serious misgivings about the arrangement because of Fay's temper tantrums and general rude behaviour. The means to persuade her to stay employed by Constance is to remind her of the wealth of the family and all the benefits she will realise by remaining with them. This of course proves to be true as the Wickhams provide Thule with food, shelter, clothing and the much desired education, first through private tuition and then at "one of the best private schools in the country" (99).

However, the dependency of blacks on whites is not merely reflected in the material things they receive. Blacks are depicted as being so utterly dependent on whites that the children at the mission are said to have "just sat and waited. Sometimes they talked to one another. Mostly they sat until food came" (23). These children will do nothing for themselves, not even to clean after themselves reflecting the utter incapacity of blackness. Presenting the children in this way gives the impression that this dependency is an innate feature in black people.

Similarly we are shown this dependency through Simon, Constance's son, a teacher, who, after an attack on their neighbourhood in which his mother is badly burnt, and he himself injured, drives to the Wickhams for help instead of taking her straight to the hospital. Flo is justifiably surprised to learn that he has brought his mother to the house and not taken her to the hospital and asks him "[w]hy didn't you drive straight to the hospital? Why did you come here?" to which he responds "I ..." (92). He has no answer, for he has no reason for coming to their house, it is merely authorial manipulation to enhance the depiction of blacks as being so utterly reliant on whites that even when their lives are in danger they are incapable of thinking for themselves. Bee eventually arrives and drives Constance to the hospital because Simon is no longer in any condition to drive further but she dies from the injuries she sustained.

The portrayal of whiteness as bounteous hinges on an inverse presentation of blackness as destitute and needy. In this way the full extent of white generosity is given prominence while the stereotype of poor blacks who are not able to sustain themselves without white assistance is upheld. All the white characters in this novel are portrayed as good and kind, while the blacks although, not negatively portrayed, are presented as needing the white people for their very survival.

5.4.5 Fighting Among Themselves

The phenomenon that has come to be known as 'black on black' violence is a feature in a number of South African youth novels such as Elana Bregin's *The Redhaired Khumalo* (1994), Lawrence Bransby's *The Boy who Counted to a Million* (1995), Michael Williams' *Into the Valley* (1990), Peter Slingsby's *The Joining* (1996), B. Munitich's *Thoko* (1993) and S. Braude's *Mpo's Search* (1994) and is a recurring feature of this novel as well. What is noteworthy about this phenomenon is the fact that it racialises acts of violence only where the perpetrators and victims are both black. However, in instances where the perpetrators and victims are both white the violence is not racialised.

The various states of emergency that were introduced during the 1980s led to a wave of violence that swept the country especially in black areas (Jamal 2005: 10). However, contrary

to the popularised depiction of “black on black violence”, C. F. Swanepoel (1987: 60) points out that violence has been the result of every inter-group encounter throughout the history of South Africa. The English and Afrikaners have also had various violent encounters and yet these violent encounters have never been referred to as “white on white” violence. Farred (1992: 19) says of this phenomenon that “[t]he horrendous battles cannot therefore be reduced to ‘black-on-black’ violence. They are about something far more important and ominous: the transformation of a cultural identity in a sharp-edged political weapon”.

The author’s failure to contextualise the violence and locate its advent in the policy of apartheid is not unique to this novel. All the novels already mentioned that include instances of so called black on black violence are equally remiss in pointing out the role of the state in the violence. Farred (1992: 217) notes that within the first six months of 1991 an estimated 1000 black people were killed in “bloody exchanges variously labelled ‘tribal clashes,’ ‘black-on-black violence,’ ‘ethnic strife,’ and ‘internecine black strife’”. Farred (1992: 217) states that “there is no question that the South African government’s security forces [were] clandestinely involved in fuelling the battles and perpetrating murder”. It is his contention that the state not only engaged in acts of direct violence within black communities, but that it manipulated laws and policies in such a way as to ensure that violence within these communities was the result:

The devastating events endured by the black community in the mid 1980’s would seem to suggest that the apartheid regime has played its role perfectly. The NP used the law to foist and impose cultural identities upon black South Africans with the express intention of sowing internal dissension while standing idly by as “tribal violence” exploded. The violence deflected attention and energies away from the struggle that was being waged, on other fronts, against the embattled white minority. Students ...were locked in bloody clashes with the security forces on an almost daily basis (Farred 1992: 217).

The apartheid government also benefited from the violence in the township by portraying it as being perpetrated by the liberation movements, thus depicting its members as not only murderous, but also untrustworthy. This was done in an effort to undermine the support the liberation movements might have received from all sectors of society and at the same time

show the liberation leaders as being incapable of controlling their supporters or protecting the communities (Maphai 1993).

In the novel Bojé attempts to explain how the violence has escalated in the villages and townships by having Nathi join a group of other men from the village who are plotting a revenge attack on the village that attacked them. By turning the previously innocent and non-violent Nathi into a hate-filled angry youth bent on revenge Bojé is able to demonstrate to the reader how the violence becomes an on-going feud between communities. However, in failing to explore the reasons behind the violence she leaves the reader with the impression that it is driven by sheer mindless brutality and this perception is enhanced by the fact that the victims are not simply murdered, but they are tortured as well. This portrayal of brutality culminates in the shooting of the little boy who spies on Nathi's group resulting in their ambush and death.

On arriving in the city Thule learns that there is violence in the townships which has led to the closure of schools and with the increase in violence is a concomitant increase in the number of children who are being brought to the mission worsening living conditions. There are various instances in the novel where Bojé references the fighting in the villages and townships but there is never a point where the history or background to the violence is looked at. It is only the effects of the violence that the reader is made aware of, especially its impact on the mission. In the only instance where responsibility for the violence is discussed the freedom fighters are held solely responsible: "The news reader confirmed their worst fears. Freedom fighters had set out to do their worst" (94).

Bojé presents the violence in the townships as being caused by the freedom fighters, but this assertion is not true. That supporters of the various parties had been involved in the violence is not in dispute, but they were not the only participants, nor was the state blameless in the enterprise. This statement is noteworthy because of its timing South Africa was on the cusp of its first democratic election and Bojé declares that the freedom fighters are murdering people in the townships and villages, without any consideration for what the fallout from such a claim might be. This statement also has the ring of a warning to the reader to be wary of the new

government as no doubt some of these very freedom fighters will form part of the new black government.

On her first visit to the mission after moving out Thule finds the place in a state of decay and Winnie tells her that because of all the violence in the villages and townships more children are being left alone and turning into thugs who find their way to the mission. Some of the boys in the mission are sexually assaulting the girls and stealing food to sell for glue and the nuns cannot do anything to stop them. The homeless orphans are not depicted as innocent victims of the turmoil, they are instead presented as drug-using, sexually abusive criminals. Implied in this presentation is that the children were responsible for their own situation. Whilst it is no doubt true that some of the children might have turned to drugs and violence, the depiction of the mission as an iniquitous den for youth thugs criminalises the victims.

Bojé places a great deal of emphasis on the pre-election violence that took place in townships and villages across South Africa but she de-historicises it and does not look at the role of the state in the violence that erupted at the time. The effect of the violence leads Winnie to ask Thule if she thinks the fighting will ever stop and “[t]hat things will be the same as before?” (90). Winnie’s statement is intended to convey the impression that things had been good before the violence, that life under apartheid was better for black people because the violence being referred to is the pre-election violence that surged prior to the elections. Winnie’s statement is misleading for the reader who would interpret it as suggesting that there was no violence or oppression under apartheid, and that black people are now yearning for the past when they did not have to contend with state violence and repression. MacCann and Maddy (2001) are of the notion that in their misrepresentation of the struggle against apartheid these books not only misinform the reader, but more importantly undermine the contributions and sacrifices that were made by countless South Africans towards the realisation of independence.

5.5 Conclusion

The three primary novels that were analysed in this chapter were drawn from various stages within the three decades leading up to the democratic elections in South Africa. Although this was a highly politicised period in South Africa, the novels, especially *Cageful of Butterflies*, do not foreground politics and apartheid with the exception of *Go Well Stay Well*. However, the influence of politics is still discernible in the ways in which black characters are portrayed, or the relationships between black and white characters are presented. The ideologies of white race supremacy inform much of the writing that is discussed in this chapter, including many of the novels that are cited as examples.

All three of these books attempted to give a black perspective on various socio-political realities faced by the black people at the time of writing. *Go Well Stay Well*, especially, tries to give voice to the suffering of black people under apartheid and educate white youths about the realities that were faced by the black population under apartheid. *Cry Softly Thule Nene* also attempts to give voice to the black characters to enable them to speak for themselves, whereas *Cageful of Butterflies* though focalised through the black character manages to silence him completely throughout the book. The issue of white writers writing black realities continues to be a contentious subject in South Africa with the continuing sentiment being that white writers should not write about black experiences, especially those of oppression.

However, this type of appropriative writing is fairly commonplace and the primary danger with it is that it is considered fairly benign, seen mainly as a vehicle for giving blacks a voice while performing the additional function of bringing the realities of black existence home to the white reader. It is the interpretation of the other's experiences of oppression and the portrayal of not just that oppression but the other's response to it that makes such an undertaking fraught with pitfalls.

As already mentioned, the implied reader in most South African youth novels is white and many of the novels discussed in this chapter were written with the primary intention of informing white youths about black reality in South Africa. This explains some of the ways in

which these novels are written and the manner in which the black characters are portrayed. Aidan Chambers (1985: 35) argues that an awareness of the implied reader during a critical evaluation of a text is important as it provides a significant proportion of the insight into the text. The social context and ideology of the author also greatly influence the ways in which characterisation is done and blackness is represented. However, all of these considerations notwithstanding what is revealed in these novels is that the depiction of blackness was largely stereotyped during the era of apartheid. Whether or not this was a function of the context within which these novels were written will be revealed in the analysis of novels from the post-apartheid era in chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Writing the Other in Post-Apartheid Literature

6.1 Black Images in Black South Africa

The year 1994 brought with it the end of apartheid and ushered in a period that was characterised by feelings of elation and great optimism especially among the black populace, and despondency in certain segments of the white population. The majority of the country, both black and white, was, however, greatly optimistic because the transition to majority rule had finally been accomplished without plunging the country into anticipated civil war. Fears of reprisal against the white populace were allayed by Nelson Mandela's reconciliatory stance when he took over the office of the presidency.

This conciliatory tone was carried over into some of the novels written after independence, which portray or explore interracial friendship and engagement. Novels such as: *A Spider in the Library* (M. Auerbach 1995); *The Joining* (Peter Slingsby 1996); *The Diary Without a Key* (Julie Frederiske 1994); *Joe Cassidy and the Red Hot Cha-Cha* (Janet Smith 1994); *Sharp Sharp Zulu Dog* (Anton Ferreira 2003); *The Worst Year of My Life So Far* (Sarah Britten 2000); and *The Red Haired Khumalo* (Elana Bregin 1994) reflect this optimism with regard to black/white relations. MacCann and Maddy (2001), however, assert that there are also examples in youth's literature, which indicate the lack of confidence some authors had in a black government even after the smooth transition to democracy. Novels such as *The Slayer of Shadows* (Elana Bregin 1996); *Skyline* (Patricia Schonstein Pinnock 2000) *The Boy Who Counted to a Million* (Lawrence Bransby 1995) are examples of novels that reflect white misgivings about the new government.

MacCann and Maddy (2001) also comment on the fact that in many of these novels certain important questions and issues about the historical reasons behind the prevalence of economic disparities between the racial groups in South Africa continue not to be addressed. A counter question raised by this research is whether a novel necessarily needs to address such questions, if these questions are not consistent with the format and nature of the novel. It is the contention of this thesis that addressing socio-political issues is not necessarily the function of

the novel. However, it must be noted that if a novel references such issues it must do so with a measure of accuracy so as not to taint the reader with the author's ideological predisposition.

As has been pointed out by Stephens (1992) and Inggs (2002), novels, especially those for children and the youth, have an informative function and as such should not portray a biased or inaccurate depiction of socio-political issues and their ramifications. Makodi (2003: 81) accepts that a novel need not be as accurate in its depiction of historical events as a history text. But he goes on to point out that novels are better able to capture and explore the socio-political impact of events on individuals in a way that historical accounts cannot. In a similar vein Sole (1993: 313) notes that:

Neither literary realism nor historical exegesis can be as complex as the history they gesture towards: reality in both cases is processed through modes of narrative representation and forms of cognition as they are organised by the perceptions of the writer concerned. Both aim to condense and explain, and contain ideological proclivities.

The novelist's representation of historical themes though exempt from accuracy should give an interpretive depiction that has some measure of veracity. The central motivational factor to MacCann and Maddy's call for novels that question the prevailing social conditions in South Africa is the fact that portraying the inequalities in South Africa without grounding them in the system of apartheid gives the reader the impression that the victims of apartheid were responsible for their own depressed socio-economic existence.

Although the issue of race is no longer a primary theme in novels that were written after 1994, these novels continue to depict black/white relationships and it is the ways in which these black characters are represented which is the continuing concern of this thesis. One of the main elements of this analysis is to determine whether or not the changes in the political arena brought with them concomitant changes in the ways in which blackness is represented and portrayed by white writers.

As noted by Lippmann (1922), stereotypes, once established, are very difficult to dislodge and the ways of perceiving the other do not change simply because the political dispensation

within which the author exists has changed. The ideology of the writer, which is formed over years through various influences in the life of the writer is also a consideration in this process. This ideology might also be resistant to change and it seems improbable that it would change simply because a new regime has assumed power especially if the ideology of the new regime is contrary to that of the writer. This issue of ideology is, as Stephens (1992) points out, pivotal to the entire writing process, influencing as it does virtually all aspects of the text.

Changing one's ideology is a complex and wilful process and is often neither possible nor even a desired outcome in relation to changes in the political dispensation. There is an erroneous belief that once the socio-political environment changes for a system that is preferred by the majority that it will bring about changes in the ideology of the entire populace. The commonly acknowledged fact that apartheid was an oppressive system is not necessarily subscribed to by everyone and although there was near universal consensus that a system of majority rule was required in South Africa there remained a sizeable segment of the population that opposed political change. What is equally probable is that not all who were opposed to apartheid supported the notion of a black government. The established stereotypes of blackness permeated a large segment of the white population and influenced the ways in which white writers continue to portray blackness within their work.

This final chapter looks closely at literature written in the post-apartheid era, as in the preceding chapter three novels have been selected from this era and will be individually analysed, for how changes in the political dispensation affected the ways in which blackness is represented in youth literature in South Africa. As has been previously noted a majority of post-apartheid youth novels quickly dispensed with race and politics as thematic focal areas and concerned themselves with what is considered typically teenage issues of relationships, identity and belonging. This is an aspect of post-apartheid writing that is given particular attention by Inggs (2000), novels such as *The Diary Without a Key* (Julie Frederiske, 1994); *The Worst Year of My Life So Far* (Sarah Britten, 2000); *The White Giraffe* (Lauren St. John, 2006) *Spirit of the Mountain* (Shelley Davidow, 1996); *The Joining* (Peter Slingsby, 1996) all look at issues that are specific to the characters as individuals and as teenagers. Other novels written after independence use science fiction to explore similar themes that emphasise the

individual's search for self-actualisation. Novels such as *Savannah 2116 AD* (Jenny Robson 2006) *Cassandra's Quest* (K.H. Briner 2000) *The Denials of Kow-Ten* (Jenny Robson 1998) and *The Sons of Anubis* (Robin Saunders 1998) place emphasis on the individual and their personal struggle to the almost complete exclusion of political themes.

Alternative themes are more generic issues of poverty, homelessness, teenage angst and similar social issues that do not necessarily apply to any one race. Only one of the books that will be analysed in this chapter *The Red Haired Khumalo* by Elena Bregin (1994) has race as the main thematic concern. As in the previous chapter, this chapter will look at novels that portray relationships between the black and white characters to illustrate the stagnated perception of blackness. The continued use of stereotypes to portray blackness will also be analysed to demonstrate the fact that despite the changes that have taken place in the socio-political arena in South Africa depictions of blackness in South African youth novels still reflect the historical stereotyped perceptions of blackness. The white characters continue to be given primacy, with the black character serving the functional role of enabling the white character to be foregrounded and realise whatever it is they have set out to accomplish within the novel. It should, however, be pointed out that the fact that the focaliser remains unchanged in many of these novels is indicative of the fact that the implied reader remains the same white youth that was being addressed during the era of apartheid. Moreover, it is because the implied reader remains unchanged that post-apartheid novels continue to use the same educative literary tool as their predecessors to inform the reader of black reality in South Africa¹.

¹ It should be noted that not all youth novels by white writers use a white focaliser. There are novels where the focalisers are black, coloured or Indian. Novels such as *The Strollers* by Lesley Beake (1987); *Where Shadows Fall* by Jenny Robson (1996) *Love David* by Dianne Case (1986), *Song of Be* by Lesley Beake (1991), *Sharp Sharp Zulu Dog* by Anton Ferraira (2003); *Because Pula Means Rain* by Jenny Robson (2003); *Jedro's Bane* by Peter Slingsby (2002) and *Crocodile Burning* by Michael Williams (1992) all have focalisers who are not white. It should however also be pointed out that in these novels there are either no white characters at all or their role is marginal to the main plot.

6.2 The Union of the Races in *The Red-Haired Khumalo* by E. Bregin (1994)

This novel is set in the period immediately after independence and explores the impact of a mixed race marriage,² between a black man and a white woman, on their racist children. The marriage between the couple forces their children to live together and learn to see each other as individuals and not a series of stereotyped assumptions. Chelsea is the main protagonist in this novel and the focalising agent within the text and therefore it is through her perspective that the story is told. In making Chelsea the sole focaliser, Bregin marks Chelsea's point of view as more important than that of any other character. However, because Nkululeko, Chelsea's step-brother, is the other symbolic character in the text, representing the black racist equivalent to Chelsea's white racist, the fact that it is only Chelsea's point of view that we are privy to undermines the symbolism of Nkululeko's character. What this also does is to prioritise the impact of the marriage on Chelsea, making her emotions the ones worthy of note, leaving the reader with the impression that a mixed-race marriage would have a greater emotional effect on white children than it would on black children.

Chelsea's response is allotted the most prominence, and she is so horrified by her mother's marriage that her reaction is to spout a series of racist stereotypes about black people:

he's a black man! ... He comes from a completely different culture to ours. ... What happens when he starts wanting to slaughter live goats and chickens in our garden for his Ancestor ceremonies? ... they do that - it's their culture! And what if he decides to take a second wife? It's not considered bigamy in their tradition ... come to think of it, what if he already has another wife, ... [y]ou wouldn't even know about it! She's probably stuck away in some rural area with his millions of kids (17).

The opinions that Chelsea expresses are based on typical stereotypes of black people and their culture. What is most noticeable about this outburst is that there is nothing about Chester as an individual that Chelsea points to as objectionable; her objections stem only from the fact that he is black and the things that she associates with blackness. Chelsea's outburst also serves to locate her as a racist, and Bregin uses her racism as a means to manipulate the reader into

² Interracial marriages were outlawed by the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) and interracial sexual activity by the Immorality Act (1950). Both these laws were repealed in 1985. These pieces of legislation were intended to further separate the races and maintain the purity of the white race.

rejecting Chelsea's overtly racist attitudes. However, Chelsea's reaction has the potential to mirror the sentiments of the reader thus enabling them to better identify with Chelsea. This could be read as an additional facet of authorial manipulation as Bregin might have anticipated that some of her readers were likely to identify with Chelsea, thus forcing them to question their own perceptions of black people when Chelsea changes hers during the course of the novel.

The only other character to vocalise a reaction to the marriage is Alex, Chelsea's best friend. Alex is the white liberal in the novel and her reaction to the marriage is completely different to Chelsea's. Alex sees this marriage as being "new South Africa ... pioneering and brave" (19). The choices of adjectives to describe a romantic association are reflective of the political and racial landscape, marrying a black man is seen by the liberal white character as pioneering and brave. Never at any point during the discussion does the question of love enter into the conversation, indeed throughout the novel the only time that the love between the couple is mentioned is by Beth, Chelsea's mother, during a conversation with Chelsea. Alex's response does, however, also reflect more honestly the way in which some people might see Beth and Chester's union, for despite the fact that Alex thinks this marriage is "cool" underlying these expressions of unperturbed acceptance there is an acknowledgement of its unusualness and potential impropriety.

Chelsea and Alex are the only two characters in the novel who voice their opinions and feelings about the marriage. Nkululeko's reaction to the news or indeed how he feels about the marriage is conveyed to the reader through a third party. The reader learns of Nkululeko's feelings through his father informing Chelsea that Nkululeko was also against the marriage and so angry about it that he did not speak to his father for a week. The fact that Nkululeko is never given a voice to express his own feelings leaves the reader with the impression that the author considers them insignificant. Indeed we only learn of his feelings when his father is trying to comfort Chelsea and make her feel less guilty about her hostility towards the union. By giving voice only to the white characters Bregin reinforces the notion that the way white people feel about black people is more important than how black people might feel about them, and in so doing undermines the anti-racist theme of the novel.

6.2.1 Acknowledging White Racism

It is clear that Bregin is using the character of Chelsea as a vehicle for expressing the stereotypes that white people have about black people and in so doing acknowledge that they exist. This also serves to illustrate the fact that not only are these stereotypes unfounded, but that they are also extremely damaging. Later in the novel, as Chelsea reflects on her previously racist ways, she lists the various black stereotypes that she has grown up with and accepted without questioning their veracity. Bonnett (1999: 207) notes that this process of confessing and renouncing one's racist ways is a common feature of anti-racist ideology:

This paradigm, which seeks to enable and provoke Euro-Americans to confront/realize/admit their own whiteness, represents a reworking of the "conscious-raising" or "awareness-training" forms of anti-racism that rose to prominence in the 1970s and early 1980s. These approaches were characterized by their interest in the way so-called white people develop "racial" prejudices.... More specifically, they tended to suggest that "whites" need to "face up to" their own, and other "white people's racism" in order successfully to expunge it from their psyche.

Chelsea undergoes a very similar process in this novel. Implied in this strange process of cathartic naming is the inferred cleansing that comes after catharsis. This is suggested by the numerous times in which Chelsea and some of the other characters express their opinions and perceptions in racist stereotypes. It is obvious that part of the reason for this is to simultaneously acknowledge and undermine the racist stereotypes white people harbour about black people but this effort fails largely because Bregin herself portrays her own black characters as stereotypes.

This process is further constrained by the fact that the black characters are not given similar space to express their own feelings of hostility and resentment towards white people. Although Nkululeko is intended to be Chelsea's counterpart, symbolising the racial misunderstanding and hostility between black and white, but also the potential harmony, he is not given the latitude that is afforded Chelsea to express himself. Because Chelsea and Nkululeko are intended to be representational characters the emphasis placed on the character

of Chelsea presents authorial legitimisation of the supremacy of whiteness and white concerns.

Stereotypes abound in this novel and with them the characterisation of both Chelsea and Nkululeko is established, Chelsea through the narrator, but in the main by what she says about the other, while Nkululeko's character is established for us only through the narrator. However, as mentioned, it is Chelsea who is given primacy, and through her, white perceptions of blackness are vocalised. For example after the family's first dinner Nkululeko leaves the table without clearing up or saying thank you. Chelsea is upset by the fact that Nkululeko is not required to help with tidying up adding that "[b]oys don't do housework, do they? Especially when they're black. It's not their culture, is it?" (35). Although Chelsea clearly has had no previous experience of black people she expresses a great deal about black culture much of which is stereotyped notions of what it is to be black. Her assertions about black males and domestic work apply equally to white males, but Chelsea racialises a gendered issue like domestic work. In a stream of vitriol Chelsea goes on to add "[i]t must be nice to be able to use your culture as your excuse for everything ... I just can't wait till we are the oppressed race, so I can try it too" (35).

What undermines the impact of this scene is Chester's reaction to Chelsea's outburst, which is to laugh and agree with her that indeed black men have been spoilt and excuse their own laziness by saying it is "the African way" (36) to allow women to wait on them hand and foot. Ringing through Chester is the authorial voice making a comment on black male attitudes towards women. What this does is to racialise patriarchy, making it a distinctly black "cultural" feature, giving the impression that males of other races are not equally patriarchal or that women of other cultures and races are not similarly treated. It is not the intention of this thesis to imply that black males are not patriarchal, neither is it the aim to justify or excuse patriarchy. It is, however, the concern of this thesis to highlight the process of racialisation in this instance that makes it the domain of black males to expect a certain level of servitude from their women when this is the reality of many women of all races the world over.

Although Bregin has clearly identified the Khumalos as Zulu, Chelsea repeatedly speaks of a black culture as though there were a single homogeneous culture that could be globally applied to all black people. Chelsea is obviously a racist and would therefore be inclined to speak in sweeping generalisations about the multitudinous black groups that exist. However, what is most conspicuous by its absence is an equally strong counterview from the black characters. Even the heated exchanges between Chelsea and Nkululeko do not provide an alternate point of view. They consist of Chelsea hurling racist splenetic abuse at Nkululeko whose response is invariably a one line response accompanied by an arrogant and disdainful look at Chelsea before walking away. Indeed the term “exchanges” is over-stating what passes for arguments between the two characters.

Stephens (1992) points out that conversation within a text can be used to illustrate the power dynamics within a relationship between characters in a text. The writer can make use of conversational modes within the text to not only illustrate the unequal power relations that exist between the characters, but also to guide reader response. Reader response to power dynamics within the text can be guided through the representation of unequal exchanges and the “observation of, or control over, the principle of turn-taking within an exchange” (Stephens 1992: 34). The exchanges between Chelsea and Nkululeko are clearly indicative of the fact that Chelsea has more power than Nkululeko. However it is not the power within the relationship that is unequal as the relationship is demonstrably equal, it is authorial power that is unequal as it favours Chelsea, not only because she is the sole focaliser, but also because she is vocalised more in conversations with Nkululeko.

Neither Nkululeko nor his father provide anything of the black point of view that one would have thought opportune in this novel which sets out to dismantle racial prejudice and stereotypes. We seldom hear or see what they think or feel about the situation and only get the benefit of their voice as and when it affects Chelsea. They fall victim to the same fate that a myriad black characters have succumbed to, that of being the springboard for the venting and expressing of white emotion. Indeed the only counter to any racist and stereotyped utterance in the entire book is made by Alex in her exchange with Clare about the maid’s inability to speak English.

Clare complains about their new maid and declares her “thick as two planks” (57) because she doesn’t speak English. Alex asks why it is that Clare’s mother does not learn the maid’s language and why she is not considered stupid because she only speaks her own language. This is the only instance in the book where one of the characters makes a reasoned and sustained argument to counter racist and stereotyped portrayals of blackness. Curiously it is one of the other white characters who does so and not, as you would have thought, Nkululeko or Chester. Nkululeko is portrayed as too arrogant to condescend to respond to Chelsea while Chester is the bridge between Nkululeko and Chelsea. As the intermediary between the two teenagers Chester is presented only as reasonable, neutral and understanding, mediating the standoff between Nkululeko and Chelsea and it is through this role that we finally get to hear a bit about Nkululeko’s history.

The issue of language comes up twice in this novel and the conversation between Clare and Alex is the only example of reasonableness in response to it. The first time the difference of language is brought up is at the first family dinner where Chester chastises Nkululeko for speaking in Zulu in front of Chelsea and Beth who clearly do not understand Zulu. What is noteworthy about this is the fact that there is never the corresponding expectation of white people to learn indigenous languages to accommodate black people by learning to speak any one of the nine languages spoken by 75% of the country’s population. This reflects the assumed superiority of white people and their assumptive expectation that their needs and interests will always be accommodated by the black populace. Chester’s insistence that Nkululeko speak English perpetuates the idea that black people should always compromise for the benefit of white people whilst simultaneously undermining the significance of African languages. This also happens in *Day of the Kugel* (Barbara Ludman 1989) and *Pig* (Paul Geraghty 1988) *Forever Young Forever Free* (Hettie Jones 1976) is one of the few novels that includes the use of an indigenous language without it seeming gratuitous or undermining its value.

It is the assertion of this thesis that Bregin’s enterprise of demystifying racial differences and illustrating the unfounded futility of racism and stereotyping would have been better served by

a counter to the black stereotypes that are replete in this novel. In failing to counter them particularly through the black characters, she lends an element of credence to them. Chelsea's change of heart is the result of her seeing past Nkululeko's blackness but there is nothing to suggest that the stereotypes are themselves not true.

6.2.2 Explaining Black Racism

The revelation of Nkululeko's own history is told to us by Chester recounting it to Chelsea. What is most interesting about this conversation is that Chester is telling Chelsea about Nkululeko to explain his son's hostility. I shall highlight the key points of the conversation, of which there are several, as they pertain to the analysis that follows. Chester tells Chelsea that Nkululeko was also against the marriage and reassures Chelsea that all South Africans are guilty of racism because of the history of the country. He goes on to tell Chelsea how as a pupil Nkululeko was harassed by the police and that the police beat up teachers and pupils alike. He tells her that the violence that was experienced in the townships emanated from the comrades as well as the police and that when a school boycott was called Nkululeko was not able to attend school for two years or sit his final exams because anyone caught going to school was labelled a sell out and beaten up or necklaced. Chester also tells Chelsea that Nkululeko's older brother Mandla was a freedom fighter and was killed in detention by the police, driving Nkululeko to talk "wildly" (67) of joining the struggle until Chester had to send him to his aunt in the rural areas where he would be safe and there he learnt to play the guitar.

In informing Chelsea that Nkululeko was also against the marriage because Beth is white, Chester establishes Nkululeko as racist as Chelsea whose own objections to the marriage are on racial grounds. This equalises the burden of racism between the two representational characters and so too between the racial groups they represent. The reader is led to understand from this assertion that racist though white people might be, black people are equally racist quelling any sense of guilt and shedding the responsibility that white people would be required to bear were they alone responsible for the racism that has permeated South African existence. MacCann and Maddy (2001: 75) concur with this assertion and suggest that Beake

uses Chester to advance the notion that black people are not only as racist as their white counterparts, but that they are also partly responsible for apartheid.

An intriguing facet of youth novels that tackle the issue of race or the racial dimension of the history of South Africa is the fact that many of them appear to be at pains to demonstrate the fact that the apartheid government was not the only perpetrator of violence and that the burden of guilt vests equally with the liberation movement and the black populace as with the government. Novels such as *Cry Softly Thule Nene* (Shirley Boje 1992); *The Boy Who Counted to a Million* (Lawrence Bransby 1995); *Into the Valley* (Michael Williams 1990); *The Day of the Kugel* (Barbara Ludman, 1989); *Waiting for the Rain* (Sheila Gordon, 1989); *The Sound of the Gora* (Ann Harries 1980); *Down Street* (Lawrence Bransby 1989); *Skin Deep* (Toeckey Jones 1985) and *Homeward Bound* (Lawrence Bransby 1990) all clearly reflect this in the ways that the violence is not only racialised, but also made to seem as though it's only a black issue and therefore black people's responsibility also. So having demonstrated mutual racism at the micro level Bregin proceeds to illustrate mutual racism at the macro level, hence we are told about the violence perpetrated by the comrades against people in the township that were deemed to be traitors. What is also noticeable is the detail that we are given of these acts of violence and their extreme nature. Whilst the police are credited with merely beating the students and teachers, the comrades beat and necklaced those students who defied the boycott.

The countless acts of violence perpetrated by blacks within their own communities notwithstanding, the failure of many of these novels to reference these scenarios through the prism of apartheid results in their depiction as "black-on-black" violence. The involvement of the state in these acts of violence is never articulated, and neither is the fact that black people existed in a state of perpetual violence and oppression, which in turn bred violence even against each other. This emphasis on the black aspect of the violence lends credence to the interpretive reading of these novels as giving little validity to the impact of apartheid on the psyche of the oppressed. It also devolves responsibility for the conditions that precipitated the violence from the government to the victims. It is vital that all accounts of South Africa's history, be they factual or fictional, give a balanced account of that history without the absolution of the apartheid government or the vilification of the struggle being part of that

process. This is a pitfall that Bregin unfortunately fails to negotiate successfully. Chester's recounting of Nkululeko's express desire to join the liberation movement is dismissed as grief-induced wild utterings. This feeds into the notion that joining the struggle is not something undertaken by stable people, giving a value loaded interpretive presentation of the struggle and the youths who sought to fight for the independence of the country.

After the conversation with Chester, Chelsea goes to Nkululeko's room where she learns more about Nkululeko's tragic history, including the death of his mother. There is a sense in the establishing of Nkululeko's history that it is intended in some way to explain and justify his racism and hostility towards Beth and Chelsea. The message conveyed in this establishment of Nkululeko's history is that black people must have justifiable reasons for harbouring hostilities towards white people. A history of apartheid and centuries of oppression and dispossession seem insufficient cause for black hostility, the author suggests that there must be an attendant personal tragedy that justifies black racism. However, a similar explanation or justification is neither required nor offered for Chelsea's racism, and indeed there is nothing in Chelsea's history that provides similar insight for her feeling about blackness nor is one suggested by the author.

This episode is one of the few instances in the book when we get to hear directly from Nkululeko, and yet even during this exchange the author reveals nothing of his feelings about the present situation. In addition, because it is only Chelsea's point of view that we are given Nkululeko's responses, not just to the marriage, but also to the sacrifices that he has been forced to make, not least of which is leaving his home to move into Chelsea's home, remain unknown to the reader. This relocation of the Khumalos from their own home into Chelsea's home affirms the uneven power dynamics inherent in this novel. This is another example in which the author favours Chelsea with regard to the power struggle between herself and Nkululeko. This translocation is reminiscent of apartheid era forced removals when blacks were relocated to accommodate the white segment of the population.

6.2.3 Depicting Black Maleness

There are only three black characters of note in this novel. All of them are male and all of them fulfil a predestined role in the introduction of Chelsea to blackness. The other black character is Rambo, who, as is suggested by his name, is a bit of a thug and although he associates with Nkululeko and his friends it is apparent from his portrayal that he is not fully accepted by Nkululeko and his friends as part of the group. He is described as a hyena evoking his predatory demeanour especially towards Chelsea in whom he has a clear sexual interest. Despite her misgivings Chelsea agrees to go on a date with Rambo and he arrives with his friends to prove to them that he really is going out with a white girl. The black male is again portrayed as, not only sexually avaricious, but also with his designs focussed on a white woman as the pinnacle of his sexual conquest. Rambo represents the sexually covetous black man who preys on white women. I have discussed the stereotype of black male sexuality at some length in Chapter 3 and this portrayal of black men as desiring, and therefore a threat to, white women is one of the most commonly utilised when referencing black male sexuality.

In direct contrast to Rambo's character, Chester is desexualised completely, and the facets of his relationship with Beth that would identify him as her lover are not depicted. I would argue that Chester's desexualisation is aimed at minimising his threat to white women, including the one he is married to. He is simply a nice, kind gentle non-threatening black man doing the dishes, making sandwiches, and talking reassuringly to his stepdaughter. Chester's role is purely illustrative; he represents the exceptional black who is neutralised so as to undermine the perception of him as a threat. This is achieved further by the fact that he is married to a white woman and manages to gain Chelsea's confidence thus enhancing the fact that he can be trusted. Chester's function is to show Chelsea and the implied white reader that not all black men are like Rambo and do not pose a threat to white women.

This portrayal of Chester is intended to work as a counter-representational depiction of blackness to counteract the image of black male sexuality as presented by Rambo. The effectiveness of Chester's character in this regard is negligible because he is completely desexualised and therefore not construed in a sexual context at any point in the novel. The

stereotype of black male sexuality has been dealt with extensively in chapter 3, writings by Gilman (1985), Martin Weinberg and Colin Williams (1988), Timothy Keegan (2001) and Edward Rhymes (2004) all look at the ways black male sexuality has been portrayed over centuries and as well as the nature of this representation with regard to white women.

Nkululeko, as Chelsea's representational counterpart, is presented to the reader as an objectionable, surly, selfish and inconsiderate individual. He displays scant familiarity with the modes of civil conduct and basic hygiene, because in addition to his rudeness he also uses Chelsea's towel, hairbrush and toothbrush. We are told that he is contemptuous and scornful in all his interactions with Chelsea and Beth, and this fact is continually reiterated throughout the novel, which is intended to establish his racism. Indeed there are at least five instances in which we are told Nkululeko is contemptuous, arrogant and/or scornful (Pages 34, 45, 58, 61 and 62). However, because Nkululeko is the black representational figure in the novel he too must be redeemed from his racism in order to establish a harmonious existence between the two stepsiblings, and by extension the races. And by the end of the novel his redemption is achieved through his rescue of Chelsea from Rambo. Nkululeko is made to perform a redemptive act in order for his transformation to occur and is additionally punished by being arrested and in turn rescued by Chelsea. Chelsea's metamorphosis, on the other hand, is predicated on a single conversation without any requisite acts of redemption or forms of punishment. This represents another aspect of authorial preference for Chelsea in repeatedly empowering her at Nkululeko's expense and affording her greater leverage in the relationship.

The way that the black male characters are depicted in this novel is another aspect of the novel's weakness. Accepting that these characters, with the exception of Nkululeko, are only peripheral to the main plot and have therefore not received the authorial attention in their construction that has been devoted to Chelsea, it remains disappointing that the author should revert to easy stereotypes in their representation. There are no counters to these stereotypes and the perception of the rapacious black male with less than honourable intentions is perpetuated in Rambo. It could be suggested that Chester is indeed the counter to Rambo, but he is desexualised and not portrayed as Beth's lover as would be necessary for him to counterbalance Rambo's sexual aggression. Instead Chester is used by the author in a similar

way to which Becky (*Go Well Stay Well*) is used, to voice certain notions of blackness and views on apartheid that seem more acceptable when voiced by a black character. Nkululeko, though indeed a primary element of the plot, is however, only presented in stereotypes that vacillate between the loud music loving native, and the lazy hygienically unsound and uncouth black male whose redemption is only literary expediency.

6.3 The Changing Focus in Post-Apartheid Writing in *Spirit of the Mountain* (Previously *All Anna's Children*) by S. Davidow (1996)

This novel is set in the rural areas of KwaZulu Natal and is the story of Emily, a white teenage girl who is suffering from anorexia,³ who goes to stay on her uncle's farm to get away from her erratic mother who is emotionally withdrawn. At the farm we meet Anna, the woman who works with Emily's Uncle Tim, and Joey the bi-racial stable hand. Anna also plays the role of a surrogate mother to the two teenagers. While staying at the farm a baby is found and it is given to Emily by the local sangoma to look after and aid her with her own recovery.

Unlike *The Red Haired Khumalo*, this book's themes are more reflective of the books that have been produced for the teenage market since 1994. The themes around which the book is centred are completely deracialised and depoliticised, any aspect of the book that touches on either of these issues is very peripheral to the main story. Emily's struggle is a personal one, an introspective process that is exclusive of race, politics or even other individuals. However, the absence of racial politics as a major theme does not mean it does not feature in the story in ways, which would not necessarily be readily recognised as racial or political. This story is told from Emily's viewpoint, and, as in the previous novel the story is focalised through a white middle-class perspective, and this is the only perspective that the reader is given. The reader's subject position is therefore determined by this single point of view, and the attendant influences and assumptions that form part of the ideology of the writer.

³ In an interesting article on body image, weight politics and the power of anorexia Beth Younger (2003) looks at how being thin works in the same way as being white in weight politics. Unless the character under discussion is fat there is no mention of the character's weight, which is similar to the way that whiteness is treated. Only characters that are not white are usually ascribed a racial identity, and only characters who are fat are described by their weight.

Although there is no direct mention of politics and race in this book the ways in which the characters from different racial groups are portrayed give insight into the political and racial assumptions of the writer. By making the primary focaliser white, the author marks their point of view as primary. In contrast, the black characters are neither focalisers nor given a voice; again they serve the function of amplifying the white character.

6.3.1 Black Roles and Functionalities

There are two main black characters in the novel, Anna and the Sangoma. Anna is described as a Zulu woman while Emily and the other white characters are not ascribed a tribe, nationality or ethnicity. One could argue that this is done in order for us to realise that Anna is black, and therefore distinguish her from the white characters, because there is nothing else about her that would enable us to know this. However, this allocation of a tribe to the black character serves to universalise whiteness, which it is suggested, needs no further national or tribal identity, while necessitating some kind of definitional title for the other and so instead of defining Anna as black she is defined by her tribe. Inherent in this tribalisation is the ideologically determined assumption that is embedded in these books: as long as a character is not defined by their race, nationality or tribe they are white. It is taken for granted that the reader assumes that all characters are white unless otherwise indicated. What this type of approach does is to de-racialise whiteness by making it the universalised default identity. Many theorists point out that white is so privileged that it is no longer considered a race in the way that other races are (Solomos and Back 1999; Dyer 1997 and Powell 1999). So, when black characters in novels are repeatedly identified by their race it reinforces these perceptions of whiteness as the standard while othering the remaining racial groups.

Although Davidow makes a great effort not to portray Anna as the maid there are elements of her characterisation that are consistent with the characteristics of a maid; she cooks, cleans, sleeps in the outside quarters and looks after the white child. Anna's sole function in this novel is to facilitate the recovery of Emily from her anorexia. This is confirmed by the fact that there is no substance to Anna's character. She has no historical background and the only times we encounter her is in relation to Emily. The sangoma is the other primary black

character in the novel and he, like Anna, is merely functional in Emily's life and central to Emily's recovery. Finally the baby Sipho also only exists to help Emily with the recovery from her anorexia and even his health is compromised in order to ensure Emily's recovery.

It is taken for granted that the responsibility of looking after Emily and ensuring her recovery will rest squarely with the black characters. Other examples of this presumption on black lives include: Mponyana in *A Cageful of Butterflies* who looks after Frank and eventually lays down his life for him; Luthe in *Cry Softly Thule Nene* attends to Fay despite her ungracious and rude behaviour; Tsepo in *Forever Young Forever Free* looks after Jannie to the point of sacrificing his own life to save Jannie's; Grace and Tendai in *White Giraffe* are more instrumental in Martine's care than her grandmother and Thandi in *Cassandra's Quest* continues to look after Cassandra long after she has ceased to be the family maid. I have deliberately excluded any black characters who are employed by the white character or their family from this list to illustrate the extent to which black lives have been commodified and "labouralised" in South Africa, a point that is made by Magubane (2006) and MacCann and Maddy (2001). The relationships listed above are on a voluntary basis, the black characters "choose" to look after the white characters without the expectation of remuneration.

This portrayal is not only consistent with, but is also reflective of, the role that black people have played in white society for centuries. The expectation is founded on the perception of black lives as being an expendable extension of white lives in order to cater to white needs. This is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the issue of the foundling who is discovered by Joey and named Sipho by Anna. After Emily's visit to the sangoma the child is entrusted to her because the sangoma believes that in looking after the child she will learn to look after herself. Subsequent to the sangoma's pronouncement Sipho's mother comes to claim her child who was stolen by her husband because he suspected it was another man's child. However, Anna refuses to hand over the child because the child is necessary for Emily's recovery.

Even for a work of fiction this scenario that is presented by Davidow presumes too much of the reader's capacity for the suspension of disbelief. That the black mother must be denied her child, and in the process endanger the child's wellbeing, in order for the young white girl, who

is suffering from a self-inflicted disease, to get well, reflects the extent of white presumption on black lives. Emily's age and illness militate against her providing adequate care for Sipho whom we are told is sickly and refusing to take milk and is therefore in serious danger of dying. The needs and interests of the black characters are continually subverted in order to realise those of the white character and fits the stereotype of blacks being unable to take care of themselves without white intervention, even if it is in the form of a child. Is the suggestion that the baby would die in the care of its own mother and why its survival rests solely in the hands of Emily?

It also concretises the significance allotted to Emily by the fact that Anna allows her to keep the baby even after the mother comes looking for it (98). This is also done suggested by the sangoma coming down from his mountain in his full traditional regalia simply to ensure that Emily keeps the baby. In doing this he sides with her against his own people and subjects Sipho's mother to further grief and endangers the baby (120-4). That Emily is an exception is affirmed by the fact that despite the repeated attacks on the villages, the sangoma has not, until this point interceded in any of those conflicts. One is left to wonder whether the author would have presented a similar scenario had Emily been a black girl suffering from anorexia. Would the characters of Anna or the sangoma have gone to the same lengths in order to save her? Would a white character have been made to give up her child in order for her to recover from anorexia or indeed any other form of illness? In instances like this it might be instructive for white writers to ask if the scenario portrayed would be conceivable if the races of the characters involved were reversed.

It is important to note that the sangoma is presented quite sensitively and without denigration or dismissal of his power and authority. Davidow does not revert to the usual stereotypes that are common among white writers of presenting traditional practices as primitive or likened to evil. Despite Emily's first, rather disappointed, impression of the sangoma as "a guy in jeans with a heap of junk behind an old windscreen in a cave" (77), his authority is quickly established, earning him Emily's attention and respect. Emily's mother, on the other hand, takes a dim view of traditional medicine and divining and declares she has no time for people who "make potions and muti and consult with witch doctors and medicine men and whatever

else they have up there” (15). This attitude is typical of white perceptions of traditional medical practices, which are confused and conflated with witchcraft. However, Davidow distances herself and Emily from these stereotyped attitudes and presents traditional practices and the sangoma in a neutral light.

However, having said that, the sangoma’s role in this novel is like that of Anna, which is to pander to the needs of the white character. Everything he does in the novel is for the benefit of Emily about whom he knows nothing and with whom he has no emotional connection. Little attention is paid to the emotional impact of the separation between mother and the child, the sole focus is on Emily and her recovery. Emily is indeed the only character to express some misgivings about not only giving the responsibility of looking after a sick child to a sick teenager, but also the impact of the long separation on both the mother and the child, wisely suggesting that perhaps the child is not eating because he is missing his mother. These protestations are ignored by the black characters who are so focussed on saving Emily from herself that they appear cognisant of nothing else.

Although Anna is not a typical black servant as they tend to appear in South African youth novels, her character serves only to prop up the white child for whom she is willing to turn her back on her own people and subject a mother to unmentionable grief by denying her the return of her own child. It seems that there is no sacrifice too great to make or demand of black characters to ensure the wellbeing of the white character. As always there is no benefit to Anna, her monumental efforts on behalf of Emily are driven only by her love for Emily.

6.4 Evoking the Ancestors in *The White Giraffe* by L. St John (2006)

This book is set in present-day South Africa and tells the story of Martine, a young white girl whose parents are killed in a fire in England so that she is forced to move to South Africa and live with her grandmother in a game park. There she befriends a white giraffe and discovers that she has extraordinary powers of healing; that she is, in fact, the mythical child who has power over the animals whose arrival is anticipated in an “African legend”. Similar to the majority of the novels that are discussed in this thesis the focaliser is Martine, the white

character and similarly the black characters continue to be enablers of the white character, and their perspective is given by the narrator.

This book bears a number of similarities with the other two books that have already been analysed in this chapter. The first that has already been mentioned is the fact that the focalising character is again white and female. The second is the fact that there are only two primary black characters, both of whom have little substance, history or voice, and as in the other two books these two characters serve at the behest of the author in service of the white child. The third is that the black characters are tribalised, and coincidentally they are also all Zulus. As with most youth novels written after the end of apartheid this book does not focus or discuss issues of race or politics, there is only one instance where St. John mentions apartheid. It is noteworthy that in a book published 12 years after independence the portrayal of the black characters has hardly changed, they remain the same stock characters that they always were. The two black characters in this book that receive more than a glancing mention, are Tendai the game ranger and his Aunt Grace the Sangoma/diviner.

6.4.1 Traditional and Racial Identities

Although I have already discussed the ideologies inherent in the tribalisation of black characters, it bears mention again with regard to this book because of the number of times that Tendai especially is referred to as the Zulu. In the entire novel, there are no less than five references to Tendai specifically as “the Zulu” (pages 22, 25, 32, 91, 95) and an additional number of other references to the Zulu tribe and their practices are featured throughout the book. This is quite an extraordinary occurrence of repeating information of which the purpose is unclear at best and stigmatising at worst. Whilst the other authors would appear to use the tribe of a character as a marker of their race St. John in these instances of reference substitutes the name of the character with his tribe. Tendai is well and truly identified as representational of his tribe; he symbolises the honourable noble Zulu warrior who forms part of the exoticised Africa that St. John is at pains to portray. The Zulu warrior is an image that has formed part of western colonial literature for decades and conjures up images of the romanticised noble savage steeped in tradition, bravery and honour but a savage nonetheless.

In their discussion of Allport's work Dovidio, Glick and Rudman (2005: 5) state that Allport argued that "racial and ethnic categories reflect a pernicious kind of essentialism that shapes the nature of stereotypes". Nowhere is this assertion proven truer than in the stereotyping of Tendai. A single mention might have just identified him as black, but the repeated mention clearly indicates the author's desire for us to see Tendai in a certain way. He is therefore portrayed in the warrior stereotype that was the particular domain of the Zulus because of Shaka⁴, around whom the stereotype is based. Louis F. Miron (1999: 80) suggests that like race, ethnic identities are socially constructed:

Rather, like other social realities ethnic identity is socially constructed and reformed owing to historical conditions ... ethnic identity is, itself, part and parcel of a social formation, a process that is not fixed in time and that can change over time.

Farred (1992: 219) also points out that "Zulu ethnic traditions as a warrior nation [were] established in pre-colonial Southern Africa". The image of the Zulu warrior is also discussed by Pieterse (1992) who points out that Zulus were considered a cut above the other Africans and even further removed from the Hottentots; but were not considered equal to their white counterparts. Citing a pamphlet produced by Dr. C. J. Uys (1935) Pieterse (1992: 103) uses the following quote, which is the caption underneath a photograph of a Zulu warrior to illustrate his point:

Except for the skin colour and the structure of the hair, the Bantu race is very close to the Caucasian type of man, and in the above picture one might take the half-naked Zulu warrior with his noble and dignified bearing and his well-shaped limbs for an eminent bronze figure of a Roman swordsman.

It is this image of the Zulu that St. John hopes to evoke in the reader with the repeated reference to Tendai as "the Zulu". Although Tendai is identified as a Zulu tradition it is curious that the author chooses to give him a Shona name and not a Zulu one to complete the image being evoked. In this novel especially, blackness is depicted in representational tropes that fit with the stereotypes and the functions that are consistent with those tropes.

⁴ Shaka was one of the most famous Zulu kings renowned for his innovative military style and prowess. For more on Shaka see South African History online n.d. Sparks (1991), and John Reader (1998).

This book, more than the other two, highlights race by continually referring to it as the sole identifying marker of any black character that is mentioned. Note that the issue of race is never at any point discussed in the novel itself. The narrator appears to be the only one who is racially aware while the characters exist in a cloud of racial oblivion. For instance, we are told that on the drive to Grace's house Martine sees "[a] group of African children ... playing soccer in a field" (26), this is noteworthy because the children are described as African instead of merely as children. The fact that the children are playing in an African village seems sufficient information for the reader to infer that the children in question are African children.

Blackness is repeatedly referenced as a racial identifier, which is not done with any of the other characters who are not black. This includes a black boy in Martine's school, named Xhosa, who is described as black while the rest of the children are described by their physical, not racial, attributes, therefore marking them as white. The fact that the white children are never referred to as white reaffirms Dyer (1997), Powell (1999), Solomos and Back (1999), and Bonnett's (1999) assertion that whiteness is naturalised by the very fact that it is not even mentioned, while other races, especially black, are continually being referenced thus othering them and distinguishing them from the norm.

6.4.2 Reformulating Old Stereotypes

Consistent with the racialisation of the other characters Grace's race is also identified for the reader. However, unlike the other characters she is not described as black but African, and even her clothes are "African". When Martine meets Grace for the first time we are told that she is "the fattest woman she had ever encountered waddling towards her wearing "a traditional African dress" (26). The reader would be quite justified in asking what denotes a traditional African dress when the various people of Africa have their own unique and distinctive style of dress and traditional costumes. The clothing itself is not described to enable the reader to understand what comprises African dress. However, this definitional adjunct serves to homogenise African culture through clothing and reinforces the stereotype that is represented by Grace.

Grace is the Aunt Jemima⁵ figure in this book, so identifiable by, among other things, her traditional African dress complete with brightly coloured headscarf. Like Aunt Jemima, Grace is fat and therefore waddles when she walks, however this image is accentuated by the fact that she speaks with an African American accent, which enhances her portrayal as the Aunt Jemima figure. Grace's description locates her as the mammy figure in the novel, and St. John is clearly attempting to move away from the stereotyped South African domestic worker figure by locating Grace outside the domestic worker realm and function. We learn that Grace and Martine's grandmother are friends, which confirms that Grace is not the maid figure. However, in an effort to dispense with South African stereotyped representations of black characters St. John only succeeds in replacing a South African stereotype with an American one. The only difference between them is the terminology used, but the depiction of the character and the attributes portrayed are virtually identical.

Woodard and Mastin (2005: 271) describe the mammy as "a loyal domestic servant to White people. She loves, takes care of, and provides for her White family over her own". Citing the work of Collins (1990) they go on to add that this stereotype was constructed "to justify the economic exploitation of house slaves and sustained to explain Black women's long standing restriction to domestic service; the mammy image represents the normative yardstick used to evaluate all Black women's behaviour" (Collins 1990 as cited in Woodard and Mastin 2005: 271). The mammy, like her male counterpart, is portrayed as passive as well as being politically and sexually non-threatening. Although the terminology differs within the South African context it is the assertion of this thesis that the referential terminology of "house boy", "house girl" and "garden boy"⁶ to refer to adults served to further undermine the dignity of the blacks who, as the terminology suggests, were regarded as children. The infantilisation of the

⁵ Aunt Jemima is the trademark for Quaker Oat's various range of pre-packaged and frozen breakfast food but the term "Aunt Jemima" has come to be used in a pejorative fashion and is the female equivalent of Uncle Tom. The "Aunt Jemima" stereotype falls within the "mammy archetype" and refers to a black female servant who is obsequiously servile and protective of the interests of the white family she works for, especially the white children. The original Aunt Jemima was fat, wore huge dresses to match her girth and always wore a headscarf, and this is the image that is evoked by St. John in her description of Aunt Grace. For further reading see Kenneth Goings (1994) and M. M. Manring, (1998).

⁶ I have placed these terms in quotation marks to indicate that they are problematic terms whose propriety and usage in any contexts is questionable.

black adult served to reinforce their perceived intellectual inferiority as well as to concretise their function within white society thus minimising the perceived potential threat that they posed.

Like the Aunt Jemima figure Grace is fat and jovial, dispensing food and affection with an exuberance that is a reflection of her devotion to the white child. She functions as the emotional and spiritual guide for Martine, which is another function that the mammy figure would fulfil. Grace is also the enabling force in Martine's realisation of her gift and her special place in Africa, teaching her about traditional medicine and the ways of the elders who occupied the cave that only she and Martine know about. As with other black characters she serves as a function in the advancement of Martine's realisation of her full powers. In the few occasions that we encounter Grace she is serving no other role than the education and preparation of Martine to undertake her role as the child who has power over the animals.

6.4.3 Dispensing with the Burden of Apartheid

Although this novel does not in any way concern itself with the political history of South Africa, it does refer to it in providing the character of Tendai with a background. St. John uses the scar on Tendai's face as the opening for her discussion of apartheid's atrocities. However, at the very moment of introduction the author manipulates the reader's interpretation of the information Tendai proffers with regard to apartheid and his experience under the apartheid regime. When Martine asks Tendai how he got the scar on his face his response is, that it was "too long ago to be important" (38). With this declaration, Tendai dismisses the significance of apartheid not only with regard to himself, but the rest of the black populace simply because of the passage of time. Tendai goes on to suggest that Martine's grandmother might be displeased to learn that he is discussing apartheid with Martine. Implied in this comment is the suggestion that apartheid is something to be kept hidden and not spoken of, thus negating its historical significance for those who suffered under its yoke. This is further illustrated by Tendai's admission that he retaliated against the police during the assault that left the scar on his face and welts on his back.

In this account, although attempting to reference apartheid within the novel and the life of one of the characters St. John is simultaneously trying to downplay the impact of apartheid. It serves to influence the reader's perception of the importance of apartheid, and its impact on black people. The combination of the shameful confession and the suggested disapproval of Martine's grandmother also serve to diminish the impact of apartheid and its historical significance on the lives of the people it affected. The way Tendai recounts his apartheid experience implies that he feels himself responsible for it, hence his apology for hitting the officer and in so doing he is acknowledging his own culpability for those events. Although St. John is clearly attempting to make a comment about the horrors of apartheid and its impact on people's lives she undermines this attempt by placing blame and responsibility for apartheid on the victim. Not only is the blame placed on the victim, but having Tendai apologise absolves the perpetrators of responsibility.

The fact that there is a general sense in South Africa of wanting to put distance between the post-independence miracle nation and its history of apartheid has already been mentioned. It could be argued that this is part of the reason why so few texts written after 1994 are thematically focused on the apartheid history of the country. It is the suggestion of this thesis that this is in part why St. John gives only passing mention to it and in the process renders it an inconsequential and potentially inappropriate subject.

6.4.4 The New Devotees of African Traditional Practices

Tendai's function in this novel is not limited to looking after Martine while in the game park, and educating her about bush lore. He also functions as Martine's counterpoint on a number of levels, all of which serve to enhance Martine's uniqueness. The way this is done is by comparing and contrasting him with Martine, in which juxtaposition he is generally found wanting. This comparative approach harkens back to Wade's (1993) assertion that the comparison between black and white is invariably undertaken to prove the supremacy of whiteness. In the instance of Tendai and Martine St. John inverts the customary adherence to African traditionalism and western practices. In this novel, it is Martine who believes in traditional African customs and Tendai who is portrayed as having forsaken them. When

Martine asks Grace if Tendai knows about the white giraffe⁷ she answers that he has not seen it because he is young and does not believe in the old ways.

This statement merely serves to establish Martine as the chosen one who believes in the old ways by placing her in contrast with Tendai who does not, hence his not having been privileged with the sight of the white giraffe. Embedded in this statement is also the confirmation of Martine's supremacy, which is affirmed by the fact that she has actually ridden the white giraffe. However, the suggestion that Tendai no longer believes in traditional practices or the "old ways" is contradicted by the fact that he is the one who teaches Martine about traditional medicine and has clearly indicated his faith in Grace and her powers as a traditional healer and diviner by taking Martine to see her.

Above all, however, Martine, and not Tendai, is the chosen one and so to her Grace reveals the secrets of the cave and explains the powers of traditional healing and divination that were passed on from mother to daughter for generations. She also reveals the secrets of the cave to Martine because she is the prophesied child who rides the white giraffe. It is surprising that Martine, the white character, is the child endowed with ancient African secrets. However, it is the assertion of this thesis that this gift that is bestowed on Martine symbolises white power, the post-colonial white power that reveals its authority in more subtle ways. This interpretation is suggested by the fact that there is no textual justification or tribal precedence, and we are offered none, for the selection of Martine, a white child, as the one chosen by African ancestors to be the bearer of this gift. Her selection over the millions of other black children can only be understood if we accept that white superiority is the ideology informing this choice. Although Grace and Tendai's people have been healing and divining for centuries this gift is not passed to either of them, and it is suggested therefore that the choice of Martine is informed by the underlying belief in white superiority.

⁷ The white giraffe is the albino giraffe that lives on the game farm and is imbued with special powers. The fact that Martine has not only seen it but ridden it soon after it seeks her out is indicative of her unique powers of healing and the ability to commune with animals. In this novel the white giraffe is symbolic of the power of the ancestors who have chosen her to bear the gift, but it is also valued financially as it is continually under threat from the poachers. It is interesting that the poachers have seen this giraffe but not Tendai.

The choice of Martine also reflects the author's own regard for African traditional practices and beliefs, hence the decision to make the protagonist an adherent of traditional practices. The reader's subject position is influenced in favour of traditional beliefs through the focaliser's own beliefs in these practices. It is possible that St. John, aware of the fact that the reader might be inclined to dismiss African traditional practices, manipulates their established perceptions by making the white character, with whom they can relate, adhere to traditional practices. This authorial intervention to influence the reader's perception of traditional African practices might also be part of the reason why St. John has chosen to use Martine as the vehicle for the portrayal of African traditional practices.

This appropriation of black culture in order to empower the white character at the expense of the black character is part of the Bantuist ideology that appropriates the voice and culture of the other. Implied in this use of Martine as the conveyance of African cultures is the suggestion of black people's incapacity to adequately portray their own culture, as well as the notion that white intervention is required in order for black cultural practices to be acceptable to the white readership. Another aspect of this appropriation is to reflect white acceptance of blacks and therefore their traditional practices as well. This acceptance by whites unites the two races in the new South Africa, not under the tainted western cultural ideology, but under the (re)claimed African cultural identity. Tötemeyer (1988) is supportive of the construction of an identity that can be ascribed to all South Africans but this is rejected by Maddy and MacCann (1996) who argue for the importance of maintaining individual cultural identities so as not to lose the uniqueness of every culture that comprises our society.

It is not the intention of this thesis to suggest that African traditional practices are negatively portrayed in this novel as is the norm. As mentioned in the discussion of *Spirit of the Mountain*, the way Emily's mother perceives traditional medicine is a more typical response from a white character. MacCann and Maddy (2001: 38) note that African customs and beliefs tend to be portrayed as primitive backward thinking that leaves the masses mired in superstition and fear. This is the portrayal in *The Slayer of Shadows* (Elana Bregin 1996); where the people are blinded by fear and superstition to a point where they engage in the most brutal acts of violence against each other. What is however thought-provoking about *The*

Slayer of Shadows is the fact that this depiction of superstitious brutality is juxtaposed with Zach who is a traditional healer and is portrayed as a pearl among the swine. It is only in furtherance of the portrayal of superstitious blacks that Bregin presents the people in the township as hostile towards Zach because there is no reason why they would not recognise him for the healer that he is. Pels (1998) points out that part of the reason for this perception is western misunderstanding, fear and misrepresentation of African customs.

St John's regard for African traditions is similar to that of Hettie Jones' in *Forever Young Forever Free* (1976) and Shirley Davidow's in *Spirit of the Mountain* (1996) all of whom present African traditional practices in a sensitive and respectful manner. Jones' Rakwaba is wise and knowledgeable as well as an important figure in the education of Tsepo ensuring that Tsepo never loses touch with his history and culture. Although the actions of the sangoma in *Spirit of the Mountain* are questionable, he is also portrayed with a reflection of the author's respect for what he represents. Although in these two novels, unlike in *The White Giraffe*, the role of spirit medium and traditional healer is portrayed by black characters; there is no question of St. John's intended aim of reflecting traditional practices as worthy of the respect afforded them.

6.5 Conclusion

The realisation of independence in 1994 has brought about very few changes in the ways in which blackness is depicted in South African youth literature. As was mentioned changes in the political dispensation do not necessarily result in changes in the ideologies that inform the writers. Additional to this is the fact that despite the increased numbers of black people who are economically empowered and therefore have more access to books many of the white writers continue to write for a white audience and this has an influence on the ways in which black characters are portrayed or the roles they play within these novels. The stereotypes that were established about black people over generations still inform the ways in which blackness is perceived by most white South Africans. Nowhere is this assertion better reflected than in the literature of post-apartheid South Africa. Although the stereotypes and stock characters are more subtly disguised and efforts at political correctness are clearly being undertaken, black

characters remain peripheral and serve whatever function is deemed necessary in order for the white character to benefit.

All three novels that were examined in this chapter featured black characters but in none of them was the black character a focaliser. In all instances, the black characters are vocalised by the narrator or through direct speech. However, what is most striking about the black characters in these novels is not just the fact that none of them are focalisers, but also the fact that they all served the function of enabler in the life of the white character. This is especially striking in the *Red Haired Khumalo* because the novel's thematic concern is race and the interactions between black and white, and yet the black perspective is not voiced in any significant way, thus emphasising the functionality of the black characters. MacCann and Maddy (2001: 125) point out that in South African youth novels "Africans... are the "objects" that work the farms, mine the gold, cook the food, clean the house, wash the clothes, and nurse the children. They are presented as if their entire life's function is properly determined by the needs of White society".

As we move further from 1994 we note the increasing reduction in racial and political themes in novels particularly for the youth market, as is exemplified by the latter two novels in this chapter, which do not feature race as a major theme, and politics is even more peripheral. This is especially notable in *The White Giraffe* where the only reference to apartheid is not only cursory, but also depicts apartheid and its effects on its victims as inconsequential and in part their responsibility. The intention is no doubt to give the impression that issues of race and politics are no longer the concern of South Africans who have moved on from apartheid and seek only to look ahead and abandon the past to the vultures of history. However, the social realities of South Africa's race relations would suggest that this attitude is premature and inconsistent with the realities of the society.

It would be erroneous to leave the impression that there is no literary reflection of the changes that have taken place in the South African political dispensation. Many indications of this are clearly illustrated within youth novels, not least of which is the greater inclusion of black characters in these novels. It is the observation of this thesis that black characters continue to

play secondary roles to their white counterparts when depicted in novels that also portray white characters and they continue to be depicted as stereotypes. In most of these novels the only times that black characters are the focalisers, or play a primary role, is when there are no white characters in the novels or if those white characters play a marginal role in the novel.

As was the case in the political arena, the changes that are necessary within the literary field to transform the depiction of blackness from stereotyped appendages will take time. The racially charged history of South Africa has created such cleavages within the population as to make it a near Herculean undertaking to bridge those divides. Attempts by white authors to write black reality, during and after apartheid, has had minimal success in large part due to the oppressive regime of apartheid which militated against inter racial engagement. Bantuist ideologies inform the nature of the portrayals of blackness and perpetuate appropriative modes of presentation that deny the black voice black South African when portrayed in these novels.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The politics inherent in the representation of the other have been a marked feature of the literary project since the advent of the novel. Consternation is usually the attendant result of such undertakings with the represented other being more reflective of the perceptions of the writer and less a true depiction of who the other is. The primary objective of this research was to interrogate the nature of black representation in selected South African youth novels written by white novelists between the years 1976 to 2006. The socio-political landscape prevalent during the period when each novel was written greatly informed the analytical process. Central to the analysis was the overarching discussion of the representation under scrutiny of black reality by white writers. In tandem with the question of black representation was the recurring question of whether or not white writers had sufficient comprehension of blackness to voice this reality. Although six primary texts were the central focus of the analysis a significant number of additional texts were examined to verify the findings of this thesis.

During the period that is discussed in this thesis, 1976-2006, South Africa underwent a significant number of changes, particularly in the field of politics, which witnessed the country move from the era of white rule under apartheid to the current black led democratic dispensation. However, in spite of the significant changes that have taken place within the social and political arena this thesis found that very little has changed in the ways in which blackness continues to be depicted in a number of South African novels authored by white writers. One of the reasons suggested for this stagnation in black representation is the fact that historically South African society is built on state-engineered and sustained racial divisions that served to promote the image of the black other as subordinate to its white counterparts. I am therefore suggesting that this history has created perceptions of blackness that have permeated the white subconscious to a point where white South African writers are unable to construct black characters that are not stereotypes informed by the constructed other. In addition, the fact that white existence was always so far removed from that of blacks meant that the majority of whites have little or no knowledge of black reality.

In the history of black/white engagement the striving for political and economic hegemony by whites has informed the nature of this engagement and the devised dichotomous binaries that defined the constructing white self and the constructed black other as diametrically opposed. The appropriative discourses that have informed the nature of the construction of blackness utilised a mode of depicting the other in various stereotypes that served the dual function of justifying the subjugation of the other while affirming the supremacy of whiteness. These portrayals of racial difference were in turn informed by the prevailing socio-political and economic requirements and the quest to sustain the white position of power.

The theory of Bantuism was introduced as a discursive mechanism for engaging with the appropriation of the black voice and image. Bantuism is informed by Edward Said's Orientalism but because of the historical and geographical specificity of oppression it was necessary to devise a means of elucidating black and white engagement that was informed by the history of South(ern) Africa. Bantuism engages with not just the appropriation of the black voice but also the construction and representation of the black other, paying particular attention to how and why these modes of representation morph. This thesis noted that in addition to the appropriative nature of Bantuism, this mechanism is also utilised in vocalising the oppression of the other. What is emphasised throughout this thesis with the construct of Bantuism therefore is the very appropriation of the voice of the other, which serves to disempower the other and create a relationship of dependency in which the dominant group speaks for the subordinate group.

Concepts such as Orientalism, Aboriginalism and Bantuism do not exist in a vacuum and an understanding of race and its construction are vital in deriving a proper understanding of our society. This thesis described the process of the (re)construction of race to serve a specific function within society. Whilst physiological differences exist between and within groups of people the intellect, morals and values that are simultaneously ascribed to these physical differences are the contrivances of the dominant group in order to maintain their position of power. The white myth structure is founded on a belief in white superiority, but even more important than an illustration of white superiority, is the establishment as fact of black inferiority (Wade 1993).

The understanding and definition of race has changed significantly over time and in its current form has been a mechanism by which white supremacy has been validated and black oppression explained and justified. These oppositional discourses that perpetuate the perception of the black other as inferior and therefore justifiably oppressed, were the foundational discourses that produced the system of apartheid. Despite the stated claims by the founding fathers of apartheid that the system was devised for the sole purpose of ensuring that every cultural group in South Africa was allowed to develop independently of the others, the manifestation of apartheid revealed it to be a racially motivated system intent on securing white, specifically Afrikaans, hegemony in the country. The introduction of the homeland system, far from establishing independent self-sustaining polities, instead served to further subjugate the black population and affirm their status as second class.

This thesis illustrated how the discursive power of race is an enabler of racism and the construction of a society that perpetuates racism in order to benefit one segment of the society at the expense of other groups. Underlying the construction of race and the fermenting of racism are the politics of power and knowledge that determine the social hierarchy and placement of the various groups within society. The historical and functional nature of race clearly point to its artificiality and yet this has failed to deter or alter the ways in which the other is seen. Neither has it had a significant impact on the nature of the representation of the other or the long held stereotypes of one group by the other. Nowhere is this more adequately illustrated than in the ways in which blackness continues to be depicted in South African youth literature where long held stereotypes continue to be a stock feature in many of the writings by white South African writers.

Wade (1993) suggests that the ways in which white South African see blacks has a great influence on the ways in which they see themselves and their role and function within South African society. Therefore, the stereotypes that are portrayed in many of these novels are mere tropes, reflective of not just white perceptions and engagement with blackness, but also white anxieties, which inform these characterisations. These stereotypes not only represent the ways in which blackness is written and perceived by the other, but also function as the elucidatory

conduit for presenting the other to a white readership. The importance of stereotyping is often overlooked in the process of understanding group dynamics and power politics. In the discussion on racial politics, stereotyping is a significant aspect of the process, informing not just how the other is seen, but also how one sees oneself.

The history and purpose of stereotyping was discussed in this thesis, with particular reference to its use in South Africa's literature and its influence and effect on the types of black characters that are often encountered in South African novels written by white writers. I identified seven common stereotypes of blacks that recur in a majority of South African novels that feature black characters written by white novelists. The stereotypes that were identified were thematically categorised and discussed and examples of each were discussed from various novels. The selection of these stereotypes was informed by the frequency of their recurrence within South African literature and were allocated reflective titles namely: practically one of the family (the servant); not like other blacks; the primitive superstitious black; black sexuality; black political awareness; the happy native and black dependency.

The cited examples illustrated the fact that although inaccurate and often derogatory the reverse was often the intention of the writer, whose aims are often to inform their white readership about black reality and evoke empathy in the reader. Despite the noble intentions of the novelists this thesis concluded that the majority of white writers considered in this thesis are unable to write credible black characters that are not stereotypes. This thesis concurred with the numerous critics who have expressed a similar opinion and have further suggested that a lack of firsthand experience of oppression is one of the primary reasons white writers are unable to write the other (Sole 1993; Töttemeyer 1988c; Ward 1989; Inggs (2002) and Brink 1998).

Acknowledging the importance of history and politics in informing the ways in which blackness was, and largely continues to be, written in South African novels, this thesis incorporated the socio-political history of South Africa and utilised it as one of the analytical tools for an interpretive reading of the novels that were considered. The importance of the role of ideology, state-driven or otherwise, in influencing the writer especially within a society

such as South Africa must be borne in mind at all times during a textual analysis. In this thesis it was vital to locate the writer within their historical context during the process of textual interpretation. The youth uprising of June 1976 enabled the theme of racial politics to be included within mainstream South African literature written by white writers for the first time.

However, there was a concurrent reinforcement of the barriers to prevent this in the series of legislative measures undertaken by the apartheid regime to stem the tide of, not just the political revolution, but the literary one as well. This thesis considered in some detail various pieces of legislation enacted to curtail the politicisation of art in South Africa. The effect of these laws was to not only further silence writers, especially black ones, but to create further hostility and cleavages within the writing community as white writers were often less affected by the draconian laws enforced by the authorities.

There is a vast body of South African youth literature by white writers that was influenced, informed or affected by the system of apartheid which in turn informed the ways in which the black other was perceived and depicted in the literature. This thesis looked at numerous examples of this literature spanning four decades and vastly different political scenarios and although many texts were discussed and cited the close textual analysis was confined to six novels namely; *Go Well Stay Well* (Jones 1979), *Cageful of Butterflies* (Beake 1989) *Cry Softly Thule Nene* (Bojé 1992), *The Red Haired Khumalo* (Bregin 1994), *Spirit of the Mountain* (Davidow 1996) and *The White Giraffe* (St. John 2006).

These novels had several features in common. Firstly, that of informing white readers about black reality or the life experience of a white person in close contact with a black person. Secondly, all of them attempt to present a positive image of blackness through at least one of their black characters in the ways in which these characters interact with the white characters. Thirdly, in all the novels the black character existed to enhance the white character and serve as a vehicle by which the white character improves, changes or realises a more actualised self. The black character is the backdrop against which the white character is foregrounded. Finally, in every one of these novels all the black characters that are featured are portrayed in one of the stereotypes initially identified. It is therefore the conclusion of the thesis that the

ways in which blackness is represented in South African youth novels by white writers has not changed despite the political changes that have taken place in the country and the greater racial awareness in the country.

There is an inherent danger in looking at blackness through the same discursual modes that have informed the analysis of blackness for decades. Changes within the political and social spheres have impacted greatly on facets of blackness that have led to the fragmentation of the collective into oppositional contesting segments defined by class and gender politics that were subsumed under the unifying anti-apartheid struggle. Faultlines have begun to emerge along issues of access and representational politics among the various sub-groups in the absence of the once unifying common cause that not only enabled unity, but also homogenised blackness. Political and historical changes have ushered in concomitant changes to group realities. Urgencies and relevancies shift in accordance with individual and sub-group agendas determined by factors of gender, class and economics. Hartigan (1999: 191) discusses a similar effect with regard to white communities in Chicago whose hegemony was undermined by similar issues of class, gender and access.

The historical combinations of centuries of black oppression and the concurrent construction of blackness in order to further that oppression have informed the perception and portrayal of blackness as homogeneous. However, as the constructs and modes of repression assume more subtle forms the heterogeneity of blackness has dispelled with the illusory singularity of cause bringing into question the misperception of a united black struggle against new modes of othering. The mistaken perception of black unanimity of cause or preoccupation needs a significant perceptual shift if issues of racial dominance and subordination are to be successfully tackled. The commonality of categorisation does not equate to a commonality of oppression or struggle. The black feminist executive does not necessarily share the same concerns as the black single mother in the township simply because they both belong to the same categories of black and female. Whilst their race and gender militate against them in a society that is dominated by whiteness and males yet their blackness and gender is their only commonality. Their needs, struggles and access are so vastly different as to virtually negate what they share in common, their race and gender.

This thesis, though cognisant of the heterogeneous nature of blackness, has, for the purposes of this research, discussed blackness as a homogeneous group. This is in large part due to the fact that in the novels that were studied blackness is homogenised and depicted as a singular unitary group and were therefore analysed as such. To attempt an analytical regime that is divergent from this homogeneous approach would have rendered the process incompatible with the material under scrutiny and therefore questionable.

In addition to this Bantuism, like previous discursive regimes, also homogenises blackness. This approach was informed by the recognition of the fact that the stereotyped image of blackness is deliberately homogenised in order for it to be all encompassing, thus eradicating facets of individual and distinct cultures, groups, languages and/or people. The distinctiveness of the various subgroups to which black people belong did not mitigate, inform or negate the stereotype in the process of construction, instead such distinctiveness was ignored or subsumed under the overarching constructed image of the black other. A heterogeneous discursive regime would therefore have been at variance with what lies at the core of the construction of the black other and therefore counterproductive as a mechanism for the interrogation of race representation in South African youth literature.

Throughout the history of intergroup contact and the quest to prove one group superior to the rest, various academic fields have contributed to the discourses and debates, offering proof of the superiority of the Caucasian race and at the same time provide evidence of the inferiority of the other races, especially the black race (Magubane 2001). Distiller and Stein (2004) confirm Magubane's assertion that historically, mainstream academic writing about race in South Africa was divided, on the one hand, into the school of thought that justified apartheid and colonialism and on the other the liberal discourse. But despite their very divergent points of departure and political viewpoints both schools of thought accepted the construct of race as unproblematic. This resulted in a tendency to focus on intergroup relations (or lack thereof) and social scientific ideas of racism, prejudice and discrimination which were thought to be individual problems.

Distiller and Steyn (2004) go on to add that given the fact that identity, especially that of a group, is ever changing, unfixed and unfixable the tendency in current South African politics and culture to speak of group identities in absolutes is contradictory to the very nature of identity. In an optimistic vein Yenika-Agbaw (2008) argues that there is an emergent post-colonial theoretical framework which challenges assumptions of white racial supremacy and the subordinate position of any other race that is not white. It also challenges the representation of the other in colonial discourse whilst at the same time foregrounding the fact that the other still, by and large, languishes on the margins of mainstream academia without a voice.

An area of further study that is suggested by this research is to determine what possible discursive regimes can be devised that manage to interrogate race while at the same time take the heterogeneity of blackness into cognisance. Research that is not merely responding or writing back to established theory and representational modes, but rather devises other, more authentic ways of depicting blackness is another area which this thesis has found to be in need of greater attention. In a vein similar to that suggested by hooks (1992) it no longer suffices to merely point out instances of negative representation, but it is necessary to provide examples of portrayals of blackness that are empowering and reflective of black reality but do not pander to existing clichés or resort to stereotypes. There is a great need for black academia and writers to (re)appropriate the black voice and interrogate race and power politics from a blackcentric perspective.

Another area of study that is suggested by this thesis is to look at the representation of blackness in novels written by black writers with the intention of determining the extent to which the use of stereotyping is a function of racial othering. A juxtapositional analysis of novels by both black and white writers would also be instructive in identifying the gaps in not only our literary canon, but in our understanding of the politics of othering. What is required in a society like South Africa are more open and nuanced conversations about the racial politics that continue to plague the society; that is, conversations that are not merely in response to instances of racism, but that acknowledge the divisive racial history of this country and its continuing impact on contemporary society. Literature is one of the means by

which to construct a space that interrogates the racial history of this country and provide avenues for affirming representations and non-stereotyped characterisations of blackness and the common exchange of knowledge to ensure multiple origins of flow.

Although this thesis has reiterated the inability of white writers to adequately reflect blackness in their novels it is not the suggestion herein that white writers should never include black characters in their novels, but rather that those inclusions should be more appropriate reflections of black reality reflecting a greater understanding of blackness which will result in non-stereotyped characters. Whilst it remains true that one can never truly understand the experience of the other particularly if it is one of oppression, it is, however, vital as the other to not only acknowledge your outsider position, but reflect this awareness in portrayals that are not constructed on age old racially founded stereotypes. This is true not only of white authors writing black characters but also male authors writing female characters. Attwood (1992: xiii) succinctly captures the essences of what is being suggested when he writes that:

[I]t has recently been suggested that we should speak only when spoken to, in the hope that our silence will create space for Aborigines to speak. However, while silence 'is surely the best guarantor of safety' it is unlikely to bring about the political outcomes it so much desires. Besides, it misses the point that the problematic of our representations lies not in the fact that we speak but in the particular nature of how and what we speak. This is what determines whether the effects of European representations are reprehensible or not.

Literature has always been one of the singularly most powerful weapons against oppression and injustice the world over. In South African history, its significance is indicated by its contribution to the eventual liberation of the country and its power is reflected by the apartheid government's repeated attempts to silence the writer. This contributory role was not limited to black writers nor was the punitive arm of apartheid laws restricted to them only. However, just as literature served to bring the sufferings of the black population to the attention of the world, it must formulate for itself new forms of relevance and undertake a different role within the changed political fortunes of the country. Paramount to this new role of the writer is the greater inclusion and participation of black writers within the literary space to ensure that blackness is not positively reflected in numeric terms only, but more importantly in the characters and stories that are generated. In addition, greater efforts are

required by white writers to understand blackness so that the how and what of the representation is accurate, sensitive, and reflective of an understanding of blackness within the historical context that shaped this country.

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